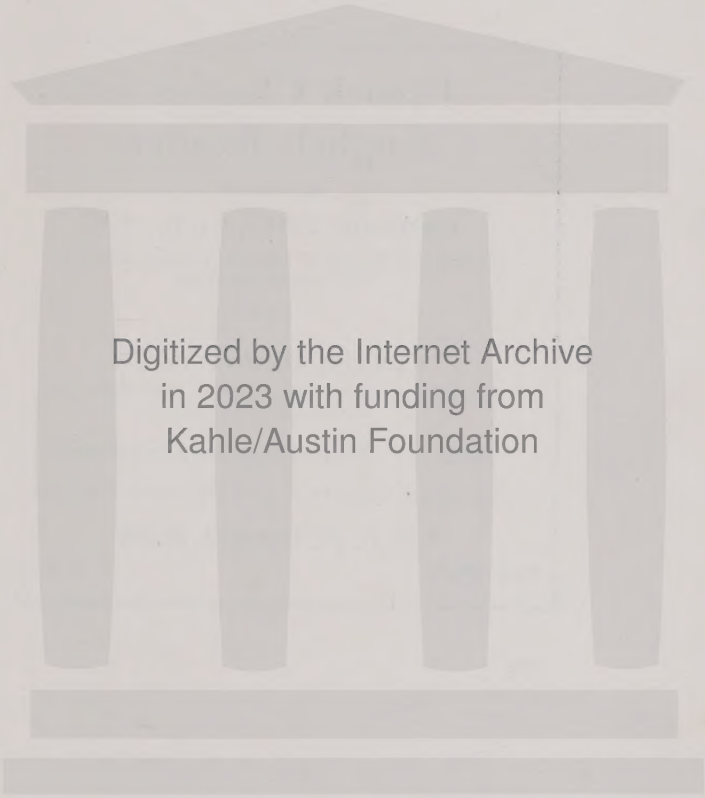
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French Classics for English Readers

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Each 8°. With photogravure frontispiece

FOR FULL LIST SEE END OF THIS VOLUME

G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS

New York **London**

MOLIERE
Né à Paris en 1622 Mort à Paris en 1673

French Classics for English Readers

Edited by

Adolphe Cohn and Curtis Hidden Page

Molière

The Affected Misses, Don Juan, Tartuffe, The Misanthrope, The Doctor by Compulsion, The Miser, The Tradesman Turned Gentleman, The Learned Ladies

A New Translation, the Verse Plays being for the first time rendered into English verse

by

Curtis Hidden Page

With an Introduction by

Brander Matthews

Professor of Dramatic Literature at Columbia University

In Two Volumes

Volume One

G. P. Putnam's Sons

New York and London

The Knickerbocker Press

1908

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The Knickerbocker Press, New York

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INTRODUCTION

BY BRANDER MATTHEWS

Professor of Dramatic Literature in Columbia University

I

IN every field of human endeavour it is not difficult to discover certain figures standing forward conspicuously,—the supreme leaders of all who seek to practise that special art. These dominating personalities, far-reaching in the range of their influence, and unapproachable in their immediate preëminence, are always very few; and never, at the most, do they number more than a scant half-dozen. In the noble art of the orator, for example, the great masters are two, and two only, Demosthenes, the Greek,—and Cicero, the Roman; and as to their supremacy over every rival there seems to be a consensus of opinion all but unanimous. Among all the poets who have moved the hearts of men and who have voiced the aspirations of their fellows, there are four, and four only, who are admitted by all to stand together on the higher peak of Parnassus,—Homer and Dante, Shakspere and Goethe. In the art of war the undisputed chiefs seem to be as many as five,—Alexander, Hannibal, Cæsar, Frederick, and Napoleon.

If the supreme poets are four, and if the supreme orators are two, the supreme dramatists are three,—Sophocles, Shakspere, and Molière. In the opinion of those who have studied the long history of the stage these three stand alone as the mighty masters of the theatre; and a wide gap separates them from the nearest of those who have emulated their mastery. They are not only craftsmen of surpassing skill, possessed of every device of the difficult art of the playhouse, they are poets also, each according to the special genius of his race and language; they are creators of unforgettable characters; they are psychologists of piercing insight; and they are moralists of lofty elevation. Sophocles, the Greek, who "saw life steadily and saw it whole," and Shakspere, the Englishman, who alone deserves to be called "myriad-minded," have each of them a tragic intensity to which Molière, the Frenchman, never aspired, preferring, for the most part, rather to remain within the ample limits of comedy. But of the comic drama, in its broadest extension, Molière is the indisputable master.

A more intimate comparison of the best pieces of these three playwrights makes it plain that these plays differ significantly in their structure, and that so far as the external form of their dramas is concerned, Sophocles is ancient and Shakspere is at least semi-mediæval, whereas Molière is plainly modern. The circumstances of the theatre are not now what they were when the citizens of Athens stood on the curving hill-side to behold in the orchestra below Œdipus and Jocasta vainly struggling to disentangle themselves from the meshes of fate; and they are

no longer what they were when the turbulent mob of London clustered around the thrust-out platform of the Globe Theatre, with its arras pendent from the edge of the gallery above, while Hamlet tried the conscience of the King. The playhouse for which Molière prepared his pieces was roofed and lighted, and his stage had scenery. His plays are acted to-day with no enforced rearrangement, but precisely as he intended. Of the three supreme masters of the dramatic art Molière is the only modern; and it is on the model he left that the later dramatists of every language have perforce taken pattern for now two centuries and a half.

There is importance also in the fact that we have a rich fund of information concerning the career of Molière, while we are left in doubt with regard to much in the life of Shakspere, and while we know far less than we wish to know about Sophocles. Our acquaintance with Sophocles, the man, is but little, and that little is largely made up of ingenious inferences, like the little we believe we know about Shakspere. Molière is far nearer to us; there is a cloud of witnesses to tell us what manner of man he was; and everything that we learn about him leads us to the pleasant belief that the man himself was as interesting and as worthy as the work he accomplished.[1]

II

Molière was a Parisian by birth—like those other

[1] The writer desires to express his thanks to Messrs. J. A. Hill & Co., for permission to use as the basis of this introduction an article contributed to the *Library of the World's Best Literature*, edited by the late Charles Dudley Warner.

typical Frenchmen, Villon and Voltaire, Regnier and Regnard, Boileau, La Bruyère, Beaumarchais, and Musset. He was born in 1622, probably in the house now No. 96 Rue St. Honoré, and probably on January 15th or a day or two earlier. His real name was Jean Baptiste Poquelin,—"Molière" being a stage-name assumed only when he left his father's house to become an actor. His father was a prosperous tradesman, an upholsterer,—one of the eight of that craft holding a royal appointment (*valet de chambre tapissier du roi*), which required him to be in attendance on the King three months of the year to see that His Majesty's furniture was always in fit condition. His mother, apparently a woman of both character and culture, died when Molière was but ten; and the next year his father married again, only to lose his second wife before Molière was fifteen.

As the son of a flourishing burgher, Molière received an excellent education. In 1636, being then fourteen, he was sent to the Collège de Clermont, one of the leading educational institutions of Paris, conducted by the Jesuits and attended by the youth of the first families of France. He seems to have stayed there five years, acquiring the humanities and getting well schooled in philosophy. He may or may not have been a pupil of Gassendi; and he may or may not have attempted a translation of the great poem of Lucretius: many of the legends of his life that have come down to us will not withstand skeptical scrutiny. That he studied law is certain; and it is possible even that he was admitted to the bar.

In the meantime he had been assured of the suc-

cession to his father in the royal appointment; and it is more than probable that he was in attendance on Louis XIII., as his father's substitute, in June, 1642, when Cinq-Mars was arrested. Before the end of the next year, however, the son of the royal upholsterer had left his paternal home, had thrown in his lot with a group of strolling actors, and had assumed the stage name of "Molière," which he was to render forever illustrious. The French drama was beginning its most glorious period,—Corneille's *Cinna* and *Horace* and *Le Menteur* (The Liar) having followed one another in rapid succession. The influence of the Spanish theatre was making itself felt; and even more potent perhaps was the example set by the brisk and bustling performances of the Italian comedians then established in Paris; while the robust farces of the French themselves lost nothing of their comic force when represented by the broadly humorous followers of Gros Guillaume and Gautier Garguille.

At the head of the company that Molière joined was Madeleine Béjart, a charming woman and a capable actress. For two or three years the "Illustre Théâtre" (as the troupe called itself in accordance with the grandiloquent custom of the stage in those days) made ineffectual efforts to get a foothold in Paris; and more than one of its members—including Molière—had to endure brief terms of imprisonment for debt. At last, in 1646, it gave up the fight in the capital and betook itself to the provinces, where it remained for twelve years. The record of Molière's wanderings is fragmentary, but it is known that in 1648 he was at Nantes, Limoges, Bordeaux, and

Toulouse; in 1650 at Narbonne; in 1653 at Lyons; in 1654 at Montpellier; in 1657 at Dijon and Avignon; and in 1658 at Rouen. From the "Roman Comique" we can get some idea of the life of the vagabond comedians in those days, and of the kind of adventure likely to befall them; but the companions of Molière seem to have achieved a certain success soon after they left Paris, and they were probably never reduced to the pitiful straits that befell the sorry heroes of Scarron's narrative.

From Rouen the journey to Paris was easy; and Molière was at last able to secure the patronage of Monsieur, the younger brother of the young King, Louis XIV. He had left the city of his birth little more than a raw recruit of the stage; and now he returned to the capital the most accomplished comedian of his time, a dramatist whose earlier comic plays had already met with warm popular appreciation in the provinces, and a manager surrounded by a homogeneous company of skilled comedians, all devoted to him and all having high confidence in his ability. As a writer of plays Molière had begun modestly with farces on the Italian model, but with a fuller flavour of humour, more like that in the old French folk-tales. Most of these 'prentice trifles are lost, although the author probably worked into his more mature pieces all that was valuable in them. The strongest of the plays which he had produced while he was still a strolling player in the provinces was *L'Étourdi* (The Blunderer), brought out in Lyons in 1653, and often acted in Paris to-day, after two centuries and a half.

At this time Molière was only thirty-six, and he

was unusually well equipped for the comic drama. He had begun with a solid training in philosophy; and he had gained a thorough knowledge of the theatre and a wide acquaintance with mankind. It is fair to assume that through his father he had had an insight into the middle class; that through his father's workmen he had been able to get an understanding of the artisan; and that through his father's royal appointment he had had opportunities of observing the courtiers. In the course of his wanderings he had been brought in contact with the peasants, and also with the inhabitants of the provincial towns. On his return to the capital he was to become intimate with Mignard, the painter, and with Boileau, Racine, and other men of letters; and he was to have occasion for closer observation of the court.

The long years of strolling in the provinces had not only trained the company to an incomparable perfection in comedy, but had also brought financial prosperity. The actors of the troupe owned in common rich costumes, scenery, and properties; and some of them had severally money out at interest. Molière returned to the capital almost a rich man; and he was able to enlarge his fortune by his successful management in Paris. As it happened, the first appearance of the company before the King, in a theatre erected in the Louvre, was almost a failure (October 24th, 1658). The play was Corneille's *Nicomède*, a tragedy; and Molière and his companions were more at home in comedy. Moreover, Molière was natural in his histrionic method; and the custom of the day required that tragedy should be

interpreted in toplofty fashion. At the conclusion of the serious play, Molière, who was an easy and adroit speaker, came forward with a neatly turned compliment to the King, and asked permission to add to the program one of the little farces they had often acted in the country. This little farce was *Le Docteur amoureux* (The Doctor in Love), and it made the King laugh heartily.

The royal permission was given for the company to establish itself in Paris; and Molière was at first allowed the use of a theatre in the Petit Bourbon, where he and his companions appeared on the nights not already reserved for the Italian comedians. There were then two other theatres in Paris: one at the Hôtel de Bourgogne, where was the company specially patronised by the King, and the other in the Marais. Molière seems to have tried to establish his company as a rival in tragedy of the actors of the Hôtel de Bourgogne; but he met with no popular approval till he returned to comedy, in the acting of which he and his comrades were really superior. In November, 1658, he brought out the *Étourdi*, already successful at Lyons and elsewhere, and at once equally successful in Paris. The *Étourdi* is a long farce on the Italian model, with traditional characters, but having a vivacity and a verve all Molière's own; although the plot is rather mechanical, its dialogue has an exuberant brilliancy which led Victor Hugo to prefer it above any of its author's more mature plays. It was followed by another comic play, also already performed in the provinces,—the *Dépit amoureux* (The Lover's Quarrel), which became instantly as popular as its pre-

decessor; in a condensed form it still holds the stage in France.

It is doubtful whether his next piece was absolutely new, or whether it also had been tried during his wanderings outside of the capital. It is not doubtful that this little one-act comedy was made of richer material than any of its predecessors, and that it contained a promise of the finer work to follow shortly. The *Précieuses ridicules* (November 18th, 1659) was the title of the little play (The Affected Young Ladies); and it was a piquant and telling satire upon the affectations of literary culture then prevalent. Although somewhat farcical in its plot and in its details, it was truly a picture of life; and it had for its central figure Mascarille, the same mask-character which had conducted the intrigue of the *Étourdi*, and which Molière had lovingly elaborated for his own acting. There is a legend that an aged spectator at its first performance cried out, "Take courage, Molière, this is good comedy!" And yet one of those satirised had influence enough to have the new play interdicted; but the interdiction was soon lifted, and the second performance took place a fortnight after the first. When the King returned to Paris the play was acted before him to his great satisfaction; and it helped to establish Molière in the royal favour,—a point of great importance in those days when the Sovereign arrogated to himself all the functions of government.

The good-will of the monarch was doubly valuable to a man like Molière, who was going to speak his mind freely on the stage in one play after another, boldly to assault hypocrisy and vice, and

unhesitatingly to make many enemies. His next piece, however, *Sganarelle* (May 28th, 1660), had no ulterior purpose; its object was merely to make the spectators laugh. Molière was shrewd always in the management of his theatre, ever ready to give his audience another play of a kind they had already approved. But a few months after the production of *Sganarelle*, it looked for a little while as though Molière might have no theatre to manage. Without notice the theatre in the Petit Bourbon was maliciously demolished, and the company was left without a stage on which to act. Then the King assigned to Molière and his comrades the large theatre in the Palais Royal which Richelieu had built for the performance of a play of his own.

This theatre had to be repaired; and not until January, 1661, was Molière able to begin his season there. His first new play on this new stage was a failure. *Don Garcie de Navarre* (February 4th, 1661), is the dullest of Molière's works, and one in which he is seen to least advantage. It was a heroic-comedy on the Spanish model; and the artificial plot gave small scope to Molière's humour or to his knowledge of human nature. He took the defeat hard; he acted the play more than once before the King; and he ventured to revive it two years later. But the appeal was decided against him, and he never repeated the blunder. Probably this failure, painful as it may have been at the moment, was of advantage to his future development, in that it forced him to confine himself to the comic drama which was his true field, and in that it led him to

enlarge the conception of comedy so that it could contain his loftier vision of life.

III

Like Shakspere, Molière was a good man of business, with a keen eye to the main chance, and glad to have money to put out at interest. Like Shakspere again, Molière began as a dramatist by writing plays of no real depth, with little promise of his future greatness. *Love's Labour 's Lost* is like the *Étourdi* in that it is empty except of cleverness, and of cleverness paraded for its own sake; both plays are obviously written by bright young fellows who have not yet observed life seriously or reflected deeply.

With the performance of his next play Molière took a long step in advance; he entered on the second stage of his development as a dramatist; *L'École des maris* (The School for Husbands), June 24th, 1661, was not dependent for its interest chiefly upon its intrigue, as most of its predecessors had been; it was essentially a study of character, a little hard, it may be, but unfailingly amusing and not altogether without sympathy. It showed that Molière was gaining confidence in his own powers, and that he was beginning to perceive more plainly the field in which they were to be displayed. Not long after, Molière improvised in a fortnight's time a comedy-ballet, *Les Fâcheux* (The Bores), August 17th, 1661, prepared especially for the series of magnificent entertainments with which Fouquet splendidly feasted the King at Vaux only a few days before the downfall of the superintendent. It

is told that the King himself suggested to Molière the original of one type of bore overlooked by the dramatist in the play as first produced; and that this royal hint was instantly seized, a new character being added to the piece before it was next performed. Here again, it may be interesting to note that Shakspere is said to have written the *Merry Wives of Windsor* in compliance with a suggestion of Queen Elizabeth, who is supposed to have wished to "see the fat Knight in love."

Molière availed himself of his father's place as *valet de chambre tapissier* of the King to keep in closer contact with the court than would ordinarily be possible to an actor or a dramatist. He insisted on performing the duties of the office, in spite of the protest of those of his fellow-officials who did not wish to associate with a comedian. There is little or no warrant for the legend that Louis XIV. himself once rebuked these contemners of the actor by inviting Molière to share his own supper; and yet the picturesque scene has been painted both by Ingres and by Gérome. There is no doubt, however, that Louis XIV. did esteem Molière highly, certainly finding him most ingenious in the invention of the ballets in which the young King liked to figure, and possibly even appreciating dimly the abiding merits of the great dramatist. Louis XIV. had many faults, but a lack of discernment was not among them. It is recorded that the King once asked Boileau who was the rarest of the literary geniuses illuminating his reign, and that Boileau responded by naming Molière,—a little to the monarch's surprise, it may be, but without eliciting a royal contradiction.

In February, 1662, Molière married Armande Béjart, a younger sister of the leading lady of the company. Molière was then forty years of age; as author, actor, manager, he was a very busy man, with incessant demands on his time; he had the fits of abstraction and the occasional moodiness and melancholy which are often characteristic of genius. His wife was scant twenty; she was good-looking, charming, and fond of admiration; she became a brilliant actress; she seems to have had rather a narrow intelligence. That such a marriage should be happy would have been little short of a miracle. That there were in time disagreements between husband and wife is indisputable; and it is undeniable that Molière was intensely jealous. No passion occurs and reoccurs in his plays more often than jealousy; and none is more feelingly analysed. That the most of the brutal charges brought against the young wife are but slanders is highly probable. When she bore Molière a son, Louis XIV. accepted to be godfather.

The first play produced by Molière after his marriage was *L'École des femmes* (The School for Wives), December 26th, 1662; a companion to *L'École des maris*, perhaps a little less careful in its structure but distinctly deeper in its insight. His enemies pretended prudishly to be shocked at one or two of the scenes of this delicate comedy, and even to discover in one speech a parody of a sermon. Most wittily did the author defend himself. He brought out on the stage *La Critique de L'École des femmes* (The Criticism of the School for Wives), June 1st, 1663; a comedy in one act which is little more than a conversation in a drawing-room, and in

which certain foolish characters bring forward all the charges made against the piece, only to be answered completely by certain clever characters. The King sided with Molière; conferring upon him a pension of a thousand livres annually as "an excellent comic poet," and inviting him to appear again before the court. In a week, Molière improvised *L'Impromptu de Versailles* (The Impromptu of Versailles), October 14th, 1663, taking the spectators behind the curtain and upon the stage itself. Showing them a rehearsal of his own company, Molière found occasion to mimic the actors of the Hôtel de Bourgogne who had attacked him, and to hit back sharply at other of his enemies, including the now forgotten playwright, Boursault.

For the King's pleasure once more, Molière wrote the lively comedy-ballet of *Le Mariage forcé* (The Forced Marriage), January 29th, 1664; with a farcical plot interrupted adroitly by eight dances, in one of which the young monarch himself figured as an Egyptian. When a series of sumptuous entertainments were given at Versailles in the spring, Molière was again ready not only with *La Princesse d'Élide* (May 8th, 1664), one of the less interesting of his comedies, but also with the first three acts of *Tartuffe* (May 12th, 1664), the strong five-act comedy which is perhaps his masterpiece. The somewhat sombre theme might have made *Tartuffe* seem a little out of place in so gay a festivity; but the earlier acts were frankly amusing, and the monarch's guests found pleasure in the performance even if they could not suspect the serious purpose of the whole work, which is the most powerful onslaught on religious

hypocrisy ever attempted on the stage. Those whom the play assaulted were able to prevent its being produced in Paris for several years; and Molière set out to make friends for his work by reading it aloud in the drawing-rooms of leading members of the court, and even by acting it more than once at the houses of the princes of the blood.

In the meanwhile he returned to the attack; and in *Le Festin de pierre* (The Stone Guest), February 15th, 1665, he gave the legendary figure of Don Juan a meaning and a power not to be found in the preceding plays on the same subject in Spanish, in Italian, and in French. Perhaps he was attracted to the subject because the spectacular element in the story was certain to prove effective on the stage; perhaps he thought that under cover of the spectacular he might the more easily let fly his burning shafts of irony and satire. The supernatural element in *Don Juan*, as in *Hamlet* and in *Faust*, is kept subordinate to the philosophical. In Molière's hands the gallant and graceful hero is not only a type of the eternal lover, but also a rival of Richard III. or of Iago in cynical villainy. The play is founded upon a Spanish drama, and yet it might be called the most original of Molière's works, the most vigorous, the boldest,—and this in spite of the fact that Molière's common sense put him out of sympathy with the romantic and the fantastic; he needed always to deal with the real, with human nature as he had observed it in every-day life. Those who had chosen to take offence at *L'École des femmes*, and who had been indignant at *Tartuffe*, were up in arms at once against *Don Juan*.

The King was besought to interdict the dangerous drama; and again Louis XIV. stood Molière's friend. He refused the interdiction, and took Molière and his company under the royal patronage, allotting them an annual pension of six thousand livres. Although it is improbable that the monarch really understood the true greatness of Molière as the foremost of comic dramatists, and although it seems likely that what the King most highly appreciated in Molière was the ingenious playwright ever ready to provide for the royal pleasures, yet it must be recorded to the credit of Louis XIV. that he did allow Molière a large liberty—far larger indeed than that which Napoleon was willing to permit the feebler comic poets of his day.

IV

Not content with having the prudes and the hypocrites against him, Molière now took for his target the abuses of the contemporary practice of medicine. In a little comedy *L'Amour médecin* (Love as a Physician), September 15th, 1665—a return to his earlier and more farcical manner,—he put on the stage several types of the doctor of that time, suggested each of them more or less by a living practitioner of the art. The author was then ill himself, worn and harassed, with difficulties at home and disputes abroad. Yet there was no falling-off in the next play, *Le Misanthrope* (The Misanthrope), June 4th, 1666, which indeed French critics have generally held to be his masterpiece, but which has never pleased the play-going public so much as others of

his comedies. Its movement is almost slow, and its action is barely adequate to sustain its five acts. In subject it has a fundamental resemblance to *Timon of Athens*, not one of Shakspere's most highly esteemed plays. It is a manly protest against the empty conventionalities of civilization,—the shams, the gauds, the trifles, the insincerities of which modern society so often seems to be made up. Its tone is lofty and its morality is austere. But there is some truth in the charge that the observer and the philosopher in Molière had got the better of the playwright when he wrote *Le Misanthrope*. The dramatist came promptly to the rescue of the philosopher; and a brisk and rollicking farce, *Le Médecin malgré lui* (The Physician in Spite of Himself), August 6th, 1666, was added to the bill to increase the drawing power of the more serious comedy.

Molière felt it to be his duty always to keep his company supplied with plays of a kind already proved to be popular. So although he had begun by imitating the lively farces of the Italians (*L' Étourdi*, for example), and had then risen to the comedy of character (*L'École des femmes*), and finally had attained the austere height of *Le Misanthrope*, he went back unhesitatingly to his earlier manner again and again; and no more thought it unworthy of himself to write frank farces like *The Doctor by Compulsion* after *Tartuffe*, than Shakspere did to compose the *Merry Wives of Windsor* after the *Merchant of Venice*. It was one of these lighter plays,—not a farce this time, but an airily comic love-tale—that he next brought forth: *Le Sicilien* (The Sicilian), February, 1667. Then a single performance of *Tartuffe* took

place (August 5th, 1667); but further performances were promptly forbidden by the authorities, the King being then absent with the army in Flanders. Nothing daunted, Molière bided his time. A very free version of a comedy of Plautus, *Amphitryon* (January 13th, 1668), came next; and in this adaptation Molière was not only abundantly humorous, but he revealed his possession of a lyric gift, not hitherto exhibited. The imitation of the Latin dramatist with whom Molière had many qualities in common was followed by another broad farce, though with a tragic suggestion if we choose so to take it, *Georges Dandin* (July 10th, 1668). A scant two months later he brought out yet another comedy more or less derived from Plautus, *L'Avare* (The Miser), September 9th, 1668, a play of external gaiety but of essential seriousness,—in this resembling not a few of Molière's comic dramas.

The royal permission was finally granted for the public performance in Paris of *Tartuffe* (February 5th, 1669); and that great comedy-drama achieved a triumph which endures to this day. Like *Hamlet* in England, *Tartuffe* in France is the most effective of theatrical masterpieces, repaying the best efforts of the best actors, and yet so dramatic in itself that it satisfies a large audience even when done by a scratch company anywhere and anyhow. In no one of his plays is his extraordinary technical skill more obvious than in *Tartuffe*, in none is his invention more vigorous, his construction more effective, his contrast of character more adroit; and in none do we feel that the dramatist has expressed himself more completely and more sincerely. *Tar-*

tuffe is like *Hamlet* in that it is the play of its author we should feel forced to select if we needed to choose only a single specimen drama to contain the essential characteristics of his genius.

A little later in the year came one of the briskest and most bustling of his farces, *M. de Pourceaugnac* (September 17th, 1669). And he continued to vary his style; no dramatist was ever more versatile or more fertile in inventing new forms. He devised for the court a comedy-ballet, *Les Amants magnifiques* (The Magnificent Lovers), February 10th, 1670. Towards the end of the year he brought out *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme* (The Tradesman Turned Gentleman), October 14th, 1670, one of the best of his comedies, full of fresh fun, and inspired by the wholesome common-sense which was always one of Molière's most marked characteristics. With *Les Fourberies de Scapin* (The Cheats of Scapin) May 24th, 1671, there was again a return to the more primitive farce, boisterous perhaps, but indisputably laughter-provoking. A little earlier in the year he had collaborated with Corneille in the writing of *Psyché* (January, 1671), Quinault writing the lyrics which Lulli set to music. And before the twelve months were out he was ready with yet another comedy-farce, *La Comtesse d'Escarbagnas* (The Countess of Escarbagnas), December 2nd, 1671, slight in story, but rich with his ample knowledge of provincial characteristics.

V

He was coming now to the close of his career; and he rose again to the level of high comedy in *Les*

Femmes savantes (The Learned Ladies), March 11, 1672, which disputes with *Tartuffe*, *Don Juan*, and *Le Misanthrope* the honour of being considered his finest and sanest work. In its theme, this, the last of his great plays, is very like the *Précieuses ridicules*, in which he first revealed the power of social satire; affectation of every sort was abhorrent to him always—affectation and insincerity and hypocrisy. When he beheld these things his scorn burned hot within him, and he delighted in scourging them.

The *Femmes savantes* has a leisurely amplitude of movement and a liberal largeness of treatment. It is the perfect type of high-comedy, which is the rarest of all theatrical species and which may be defined as a humorous play the action of which is caused, not by external circumstances, but by the clash of character on character, moving forward to a logical conclusion, the inevitable result of the interrelations of the characters themselves. And in the charming figure of Henriette, Molière has portrayed a young girl as acceptable to the French ideal of womanhood as the Rosalind of Shakspere is to the English. Henriette, it may be well to note, Molière had created for performance by his wife, an actress of varied accomplishments and of unfailing fascination, to whom he had also intrusted the realisation on the stage of the placid Elmire of *Tartuffe* and the inconstant Célimène of *The Misanthrope*.

The last months of Molière's life were saddened by the death of his old companion and sister-in-law, Madeleine Béjart, and still more by the death of his second son. His health, never strong, became feebler;

and in the summer of 1672 the theatre had to be closed unexpectedly more than once, because Molière was not well enough to act. And yet through all these trials he kept his good humour and his gentle serenity, although he—like most other great humourists—was essentially melancholy. It was under these conditions that he wrote his last play, *Le Malade imaginaire* (The Imaginary Invalid), February 10th, 1673. He himself, of course, was the imaginary invalid, being then worn out with his own illness. The fourth performance of the new play took place on the 17th; and Molière was seized with a fit of coughing on the stage, and burst a blood-vessel. They conveyed him to his own house in the Rue de Richelieu, (on the site of the building now numbered 38 and 40); and here he died "not more than half an hour or three quarters after the bursting of the said vessel,"—so his faithful friend and fellow-actor, La Grange, recorded in the register or private diary, which is an invaluable document for the details of Molière's life.

The bitter hostility which had long delayed the performance of *Tartuffe*, and which had unceasingly pursued Molière during the last years of his life, not shrinking from obtrusion into his family relations, was not relaxed after his death. Permission for Christian burial was at first denied. It is told that the widow threw herself at the King's feet and implored a royal mandate, overruling the ecclesiastical authorities. At last the funeral was authorised; and it took place on the evening of the fourth day. The procession was very simple, the priests not intoning the usual psalms. The interment took place

in the cemetery which was behind the chapel of St. Joseph, in the Rue de Montmartre.

The inventory taken after his demise gives the list of Molière's stage-costumes and of the books that composed his library. Among these was a Bible, a Plutarch, a Montaigne (but no Rabelais, oddly enough), a Terence (but no Plautus), a Lucian (but no Lucretius), a Horace, a Juvenal, and two hundred and forty volumes of unnamed French, Italian, and Spanish plays. He left a fortune of about forty thousand livres. Four years after his death his widow married an obscure actor named Guérin. The only child of Molière to survive him was a daughter, who married a M. de Montalant, and who died without issue in 1723, half a century after her illustrious father.

Shakspere had departed this life at the comparatively early age of fifty-two; but Molière was only fifty-one when he died, and all of the great French dramatist's more important plays had been written during the final fourteen years of his life. He had served a long apprenticeship in the provinces, mastering all the mysteries of his art, and heaping up a store of observations of human nature; and after his return to Paris, his genius ripened swiftly. While the novelists have often flowered late in life, the dramatists have usually begun young; but Molière was forty-two when he wrote *Tartuffe*, forty-three when he followed it with *Don Juan*, forty-four when he produced *Le Misanthrope*, forty-eight when he brought forth *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*, and fifty when he made fun of the *Femmes savantes*. Perhaps a part of the deeper insight and the wider

vision of these plays, when compared with those of all other comic dramatists, is due to the relative maturity of Molière when he composed them. The romantic-comedies of Shakspere and the lyrical-burlesques of Aristophanes do not belong in the same category; and the belauded comedies of Menander are lost to us. Some of the comic plays of Plautus and of Terence survive for purposes of comparison, as a result of which the best criticism of to-day is in accord with La Fontaine's declaration on the morrow of Molière's death, that the great French comic dramatist had surpassed both of the great Latin comic dramatists.

VI

For us who speak English, and who hold Shakspere as a standard by which the men of every other language must be measured, it is impossible not to set the author of *Hamlet* over against the author of *Tartuffe*. In many ways the two men were alike. Dramatists, they were both actors, Shakspere being probably not prominent in that profession, while Molière certainly excelled all his contemporaries. They were both managers; and both of them were shrewd men of affairs, governing their private fortunes with skill. Each of them kept many of his plays in manuscript while he was alive; and after they were dead, the plays of each were published by the pious care of surviving comrades. They were both of them surpassingly original; and yet neither often took the trouble to invent a plot, preferring to adopt this ready-made, more or less, and rather to

expend his strength upon the analysis of emotion and the creation of character. Some of these resemblances are merely fortuitous; but some also are strangely significant.

To push the comparison too far would be unfair to Molière; for Shakspere is the master-mind of all literature. He soared to heights, and he explored depths, and he had a range, to which Molière could not pretend. His is the spirit of soul-searching tragedy, of romantic-comedy, of dramatic-history; and in no one of these is Molière his rival. But in the comedy of real life, he is not Molière's rival; in every variety of the comic drama Molière is unequalled,—in farce, in the comedy of situation, in the comedy of character, and in the comedy which is almost stiffened into drama, yet without ceasing to be comedy. Shakspere is the greatest of dramatists, no doubt; but Molière is indubitably the greatest of comic dramatists. In sheer comic force the Frenchman is stronger than the Englishman, or at least more abundant; and also in the compelling power of humour. The influence of Shakspere upon the comedy of the nineteenth century is almost negligible; for Alfred de Musset seems to be the only modern poet who has modelled his plays upon *As You Like It* and *Twelfth Night*. The influence of Molière upon the comedy of the nineteenth century is overwhelming; and the author of the *Demi-Monde*, the authors of the *Gendre de M. Poirier*, the author of *The Doll's House*, and the author of *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray*, are all followers of the author of *Tartuffe* and *Les Femmes savantes*.

It is to be said also that Shakspere, though es-

sentially an Englishman, is in a wide sense cosmopolitan and universal; he rises superior to race and to time. Molière, on the other hand, despite his philosophical grasp of human nature, is typically French. He has the robust humour of Rabelais, and Montaigne's genial common-sense, and Voltaire's eagerness to attack frauds. He has his full share of Gallic salt; and he inherits also the Latin tradition of reserve, of order, and of symmetry. He was able to unite humour and truth,—fun and an exact observation of life,—satire and sincerity, sustained by pity. Like Rabelais and like Montaigne, Molière is a moralist; he has an ethical code of his own; the total effect of his plays is wholesome. He is on the side of the angels, although he recognises the existence of many an evil demon. Like Shakspere, he can pierce almost to the centre of things, even if his penetration is not so profound as Shakspere's. The moral is never tagged to the end or paraded or vaunted; but he is a shallow student who cannot discover the ethical richness of the soil in which Molière's plays were grown.

No better test is there of the real value and true merit of a great author than a list of those who love him and who have taken him for their daily friend and counsellor. The list of those who have chosen Molière includes many of the wisest and broadest-minded of the moderns, many of the sanest and heartiest;—and it is headed by Scott and by Goethe. To love Molière, so Sainte-Beuve tells us, to love him sincerely, is to have a guarantee against many a defect and many a fault; it is to be antipathetic to all pedantry, all artificiality of style, all affectation of

language; it is to love common-sense in others as well as in yourself; it is to be assured against the dangers either of over-estimating our common humanity or under-estimating it; it is to be cured forever of fanaticism and intolerance.

Certain authors there are that we outgrow as we wax in years and in wisdom. There are books that we once liked, and that now remain behind us as milestones marking the road travelled. Though we came up to them with pleasure, yet without regret we leave them in the distance. We have not tarried with them long, and unless we turn back we never pass them again. Molière is not one of these; he is for all ages of man. In youth we may enjoy him unthinkingly, amused by his comic invention, his rollicking drollery, his frank fun. As we grow older his charm over us grows also; and we see the finer qualities of his work,—his insight into human motives, and his marvellous skill in exhibiting these on the stage. And in old age we may refresh ourselves once again with his unfailing and unfading humour, and with the true wisdom which underlies it. At one time the *Bourgeois Gentilhomme* may please us, and at another *The Misanthrope;* but at all times a man who takes interest in the comedy of human endeavour may find in Molière what he needs.

PREFACE TO THE TRANSLATION

WITH A FEW WORDS ON THE STYLE OF MOLIERE, AND ON FRENCH AND ENGLISH VERSE

IT seems strange that in all these years no attempt has been made to translate Molière's verse plays into English verse. But I have not been able, after long and diligent searching, to find any, even fragmentary, except some extracts translated into English anapæsts by Charles Cowden Clarke in his *Molière Characters*, two brief speeches from the *Femmes savantes* and a scene from *Tartuffe*, done in rhyme by Professor Giese, and a few passages excellently rendered in blank verse by Mr. H. C. Chatfield-Taylor in his recent *Life of Molière*. Meanwhile prose versions have abounded, among which the best, thus far, seems to be that of Mr. Charles Heron Wall, in the Bohn Library.

Yet should not the ideal of the translator be to produce in his own tongue a work as nearly as possible equivalent to the original? And if so, how can he, handicapped as he necessarily is by the difference between two languages, accept the still greater handicap of the contrast between verse and prose? Surely no possible difference between any two ways of saying a thing can be greater than is the difference between prose and verse! And even though the translator cannot exactly reproduce the verse of the original poet, he must at least try to create in his own language something that shall have, as nearly as possible, the qualities and characteristics of the

original. He may not succeed completely. But the impossibility of attaining an ideal is hardly a reason for not striving toward it. Still less is it sufficient justification for turning and running in the opposite direction. In this case, the difficulty of the climb should not send us rolling down-hill, to wallow in that slough which Professor Raleigh has called "the despondent absurdity of translating verse into prose."

Rossetti has given us the law of verse-translation, and has nobly followed it in his renderings from the Italian. "The only true motive," he says, "for putting poetry into a fresh language must be to endow a fresh nation, as far as possible, with one more possession of beauty. Poetry not being an exact science, literality of rendering is altogether secondary to this chief law. I say literality—not fidelity—which is by no means the same thing. When literality can be combined with what is thus the primary condition of success, the translator is fortunate, and he must strive his utmost to unite them; when such object can only be attained by paraphrase, that is the only path." I should be inclined to make the law more rigid than does Rossetti, and to say that only when he has achieved the *union* of fidelity and literality can the translator be called truly successful. But it is certainly fidelity, in Rossetti's sense, that is of first importance. And such fidelity precludes the use of prose for verse.

So, when it became necessary to include *Tartuffe* and *The Misanthrope* in this series of French Classics, I could not accept a prose translation as at all truly reproducing them for English readers. I had attempted the impossible once, with the lyric verse of Ronsard, and had found delight in it; why should I not attempt it again, in a style as far removed as possible from Ronsard's, with

the dramatic verse of Molière? I have tried—to borrow a new metaphor from Mr. Swinburne—to "pour the wine from the golden into the silver cup," with as little loss as might be; and even if the cup of my verse be only of clay, I think it is better so, than to pour the wine upon the ground and let it run abroad in wasteful prose.

For Molière, to be sure, we must completely forget our Rossetti, Swinburne, and Ronsard. There is no poet so rarely lyric as Molière. This does not imply—alas that there should be need of saying so, in these degenerate and undramatic days, when hardly anything except the lyric is generally recognised as poetry,—this does not imply that his verse is any the less excellent as verse, or any the less far removed from prose. It is in fact, I think, the best dramatic verse ever written: simple, direct, true, and telling; humorous, subtle, shrewd, and strong; and attaining its effects through the simplicity, directness, effectiveness, and strength of its movement *as verse*. I cannot hope to have reproduced all its merits; it is something to have learned to appreciate them better, in attempting to create their equivalent in English.

The ideal which I set before myself was therefore *to say in good English dramatic verse* (if I could) *exactly what Molière has said in good French dramatic verse.* This principle seemed to settle at once the question of what metre should be used. Rhymed alexandrines, the metre of Molière, have never been good English dramatic verse, and never can by any possibility be so. The standard English dramatic verse is the so-called five-accent iambic, for the most part unrhymed, somewhat free to shift or subordinate some of its accents, to throw in an extra syllable here and there (not too often), and to run over from line to line; and with rhyme (espec-

ially in comedy) occasionally coming in to point a moral or to end a scene. This is the metre of all good English plays in verse from Shakspere's comedies until to-day, and it holds exactly the same place upon the English stage and in the history of English drama which the rhymed alexandrine holds on the French stage and in the history of the French drama. Historically and dramatically the two different metres are exactly equivalent to each other.

They are also, in spite of their apparent difference, almost exactly equivalent in length and carrying power. Though I have made no effort to translate line by line, I have almost always done so, inevitably. French words have, I think, on the average, counting the mute *e* as is done in verse, something like twenty per cent. more syllables than the English, so that the French alexandrine, alternately of twelve and thirteen syllables, carries about the same number of words as the English heroic line, of ten or often eleven syllables. Moreover, the number of important accents in the two different lines is, in practice, about the same; though it must always be remembered that the stress accent, so far as it exists at all in the French language, is much lighter than in English; and that its position within the line of verse (except, for classic verse, at the cæsura), must, according to the nature and laws of French verse, be irregular; while in English we need some regularity of accent to give us the feeling that there is rhythm at all. These facts, by the way, account for the usual lack of appreciation of French verse on the part of those born to the strongly accented English and German languages. Not finding in French the regularly recurrent beat which alone can give them the sensation of verse-rhythm, they conclude that "French poetry is not poetical," that the French lan-

guage is unfitted for verse, and even, as Emerson himself did, that France is a "land where poet never grew"; failing to reflect that the effects of French verse may be far more exquisite and varied, perhaps even more poetical and beautiful, than their ears, dulled by the regular and monotonous pounding of the heavy Germanic accent, and untrained to the subtle divisions, relations, and variations of number, can even catch. English verse, however, does vary its normal accent somewhat; and in the blank verse or heroic line it usually makes one or two of its normal accents secondary, leaving three or four important ones to mark the rhythm; and among these three or four, it is often the case that two stand out most prominently, dominating the line and marking its logical division. This is also the case with the French alexandrine, so far as accent plays any rôle in it. Properly, one should not speak, for French verse, of "accent" at all, but only of the rhythmical divisions or *coupes* of the lines. There are rarely more than three or four of these divisions; they mark the logical and constantly varied rhythmical movement of the lines; and usually two of them stand out as most important. In English, the so-called alexandrine is normally a six-accent line, and must always, counting secondary accents, at least suggest the possibility of being read as such. The French alexandrine can almost never be read with as many as six accents or divisions, even counting the very lightest stress or variation of the voice. Its true equivalent in English, then, is the apparently shorter line of ten or eleven syllables, normally of five accents, but in practice, when used freely for drama or narrative, subordinating one or two of these, and having only three or four really important stresses, two of which often dominate and logically divide the line. In cases where it has its full

five accents, it is heavier, and practically longer, than the French line.

It has sometimes been difficult for me, in translating, sufficiently to repress rhyme; rhyme comes of itself, somehow, at the end of the lines, and it often seems much easier to write in rhyme than in blank verse. (As a matter of fact good rhymed verse is always, on general principles, much easier to write than good blank verse—but that is another story.) In many passages I have at first dropped into rhyme, then have rewritten the passage in blank verse, and in almost every case I have finally chosen the blank verse rendering as being both better poetically and more truly equivalent to the original. Rhyme seems almost always to detract a little from dramatic realism in English ; it does not in French, because in French it is a necessary part of the verse, there being, practically, no such thing as blank verse; and so, once the convention of characters speaking in verse at all is accepted, the rhyme follows inevitably. I have however allowed rhyme to come in, in the English version, as I said above, "to point a moral or to end a scene" —that is, in epigrammatic or sententious speeches, and sometimes in speeches of a somewhat artificial sentiment; and at the end of scenes or acts; as it constantly does in English blank verse comedies, including Shakspere's.

The verse must of course not be too Elizabethan. It should perhaps have just a touch of the quality and movement of the Augustan verse in English, which is so much nearer in superficial features, though in superficial features only, to the French. But it must not be too Augustan either, for then it would certainly fail to fulfil its first law, of being good dramatic verse. Therefore it must sometimes wilfully break up the too regular movement of the usually end-stopt French lines. But it must always be

simple, direct, and true to the situation; so much so that it will sometimes even strike the English ear as prosaic; avoiding all effort for "poetical" ornament, avoiding even that imaginative quality which we English are apt too exclusively to identify with the poetical quality — avoiding, indeed, all artificiality, except that of polite and polished expression; but possessing all the added effectiveness of the best possible verse-expression. Such, at any rate, is Molière's verse.

The language of the important prose plays is somewhat more artificial than that of the plays in verse. Paradoxical as it may seem, this is because the prose plays are more realistic. They bring vividly before us those gallants of the court of Louis XIV., with their beribboned coats, their broad lace-bound breeches, their abundant perfumed and powdered wigs, and their feathered hats which they swung with a great sweeping gesture in bowing to each other. Bourgeoisie and servants, of course, imitated the courtiers, and overdid the imitation. Sganarelle, except when Don Juan frightens him into runaway simplicity, always talks with a great flourish. Even the language of the Précieuses and of Mascarille is hardly exaggerated, as a picture of reality. To translate these plays rightly one must constantly see the characters *in costume*, and individualised. They must not be made completely modern and commonplace. Even touches of archaism in the style may not be amiss, to let it give in English about the same impression which Molière's style gives in French to-day; but this must of course not be exaggerated. On the other hand, Molière may sometimes be allowed to sound surprisingly modern (as he does in French), with phrases like "he has an elegant shape," used by Cathos exactly as a boarding-school miss of to-day might use it, or "here comes the

rest of our gang"—both true equivalents of the French, and taken, like many other apparently modern phrases, from the excellent old translation of 1732. He may even, in rare cases, sound "American"; we must not too rigidly deny him, at least for Mrs. Jourdain and Nicole, the "guess" and "folks," in which that same good old English version of 1732 abounds, any more than we deny him certain of his best French expressions which are now rather more current in Canada than in France. But this should least of all be exaggerated. Above all, we must not try to make him absolutely modern and every-day—that is, merely of to-day—as most of the modern translators have done. Modern slang, or any merely local and temporary expression, must be avoided. Molière never descends to slang, even in his most racy passages. His language requires almost no commentary —as little as that of the most dignified writers of his time. In this respect, what a contrast he makes with the other two great masters of comedy, Aristophanes, and even Shakspere! Yet his style has *flavour*—the flavour of intelligence, culture, and humour combined. To render this flavour, without being too artificial or too familiar, is my impossible and charming task. The attempt may only give, as our friend of 1732 has already expressed it, "an opportunity of judging how hard it is to transplant the beauties of Molière or to hit the delicacy of his sentiment in any other language or words than his own."

The plays have been given complete, with not a line changed or omitted. It was impossible, for the purposes of this series, to give certain of the best chapters of Rabelais without some excisions, to which the Rabelaisian purists (if one may call them so) have naturally objected. But the better plays of Molière are on the

whole so clean in expression that they can be given complete, even when meant for universal circulation. For the text, I have followed Moland's latest edition, 1880–'85, except for the "Turkish ceremony" in the *Bourgeois Gentilhomme*, where I have followed the Grands Ecrivains edition. The Grands Ecrivains edition is of course the standard for scholars, and I have had it always by me, but it seems to me, wherever differences occur, to be much less satisfactory for the modern reader than that of Moland. Moland's text is complete and careful —more complete, in fact, than that of the Grands Ecrivains edition, except as the latter is supplemented by its learned but cumbersome notes; and Moland gives the correct division into scenes, and the necessary stage directions, which were often lacking in the older editions followed by the Grands Ecrivains text. Fortunately there are very few variations of any importance in the text of Molière, except in the *punctuation*, which varies in almost every line; and any edition will serve, except for parts of *Don Juan*, which is most complete in Moland's.

I have the pleasure of expressing my obligation, first, to the eighteenth century translation, of which I have used the 1732 and 1748 editions. Though full of faults and errors, it is a storehouse of apt words and phrases which I, like all other modern translators that I know of, have pillaged freely; and I have followed it closely for the dialect scenes in the second act of *Don Juan*. The old French–English dictionary by Randle Cotgrave, of which I have used the edition published in 1673, the very year of Molière's death, has often helped me to catch what seemed just the right word. It is a rich treasure of English phrase and idiom; and merely to read it, alphabetically, is a delight. Finally, I owe much, in the way of suggestion or correction, to many friends

who have read the manuscript or the proof whole or in part: especially to Mrs. William H. Hidden, Jr., and Mr. W. S. Booth, of Cambridge; to Miss L. E. von Bernuth, and to Professor John E. Matzke; to my secretary and collaborator, Miss Florence Fisher; to Miss Jeannette Marks, Professor at Mount Holyoke College; and to my colleagues and generous friends, Professor Adolphe Cohn and Professor Brander Matthews.

C. H. P.

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NOTE.—So great is the number of editions of Molière, and of works on him, that it is out of the question to give here a list which shall attempt to include even nearly all of the important ones, as I have tried to do for the other authors in this series. The present Bibliography approaches completeness only in the matter of English translations, of which I have been able to give the most complete list yet published. I have not included adaptations in English, for which see Van Laun's Introductions and Appendices, and the *Catalogue of the Molière Collection in the Harvard College Library*, Appendix II. For fuller information on all other points, see the following Bibliographies.

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[Mentioned by Lowndes in his *Bibliographers' Manual*, as of 1770. Van Laun and others mention it, on Lowndes's authority, but without having seen it; and Van Laun adds: "In the British Museum

there is, however, a translation of *five plays* by Molière, published in one volume, and printed at Berwick for R. Taylor, 1771." This is probably an odd volume of this six-volume set. Since the six-volume translation, containing thirty plays, has not been seen by any of the bibliographers of Molière, and its existence as an independent translation has been doubted by Lacroix and others, I give the following description of it. The title-pages of all the volumes read: The / Works / of / Molière. / In six volumes. / Volume [I., II., III., IV., V., VI.]. / A New Translation. / Berwick: / Printed for R. Taylor. / MDCCLXXI. Volume I. contains: An Account of the Author; The Blunderer, or the Counter-plots; The Amorous Quarrel; The Miser. Volume II.: The Romantic Ladies; Don Garcia of Navarre, or the Jealous Prince; The School for Husbands; The School for Wives; The School for Wives Criticised; The Impromptu of Versailles. Volume III.: The Man-hater; The Mock-doctor; Don John, or the Feast of the Statue; Love Is the Best Doctor; The Impostor. Volume IV.: Squire Lubberly; Amphitryon; The Husband Outwitted; The Cuckold in Conceit; The Forced Marriage; The Magnificent Lovers. Volume V.: Psyche; The Gentleman Cit; The Impertinents; The Sicilian, or Love Makes a Painter; The Learned Ladies. Volume VI.: The Cheats of Scapin; Melicerta; The Countess of Escarbagnas; The Princess of Elis; The Feast of Versailles; The Hypochondriac.]

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Fragments of the plays have been translated in *Dialogues français, anglais, et italiens, extraits des comédies de Molière*, 1799; in D. B. Lennard's *Tales from Molière's Plays*, 1859; in G. C. Brewster's *Molière in Outline*, (mostly taken from Van Laun), 1885; in W. F. Giese's Introduction to his edition of *Le Misanthrope* and *L'Avare;* and in the works, mentioned below, by C. C. Clarke, Mrs. Oliphant, and Mr. H. C. Chatfield-Taylor.

Works on Molière

(a) Early Works, in Chronological Order

For the earliest works, contemporary comedies attacking or supporting Molière, letters, pamphlets, etc., see the edition of Moland and that in the *Grands Ecrivains* series, both of which are rich in such material; also the

Collection moliéresque, edited by Paul Lacroix, in twenty volumes, 1867–1875; and the

Nouvelle Collection moliéresque, edited by Paul Lacroix and Georges Monval, in seventeen volumes, 1879–1890.

The most important contemporary document is the *Registre* of La Grange, a record of the plays given, and of the receipts of the company, from 1658 to 1685. It was published in 1876, with an Introduction by Edouard Thierry.

Further, see:

Boileau-Despreaux, Nicolas: *Stances à M. Molière*,

1663; *Satires*, 1666; *L'Art poétique*, 1674; *Correspondance entre Boileau et Brossette*, 1858.

Chappuzeau, Samuel: *Le Théâtre français*, 1674.

Fontenelle, *Dialogues des morts* (Paracelse et Molière), 1683.

La Bruyère, J. De: *Les Caractères*, 1688.

La fameuse Comédienne, 1688.

Ménage, G.: *Ménagiana*, 1693.

Bossuet, J. B.: *Maximes et réflexions sur la comédie*, 1694.

Perrault, Charles: *Hommes illustres*, 1696.

Bayle, Pierre: *Molière;* in his *Dictionnaire historique et critique*, 1697.

Grimarest, J. Le Gallois de: *La Vie de M. de Molière*, 1705.

Fénelon: *Lettre à l'Académie*, 1714.

Riccoboni, L.: *Observations sur la comédie et sur le génie de Molière*, 1736.

Voltaire: *Vie de Molière, avec des jugements sur ses ouvrages*, 1739. *Le Siècle de Louis XIV.*, 1752.

Goldoni: *Il Moliere.* A comedy in five acts and in verse, 1751.

Rousseau, J. J.: *Lettre à d'Alembert sur les spectacles*, 1758.

D' Alembert: *Réponse à M. Rousseau, citoyen de Genève*, 1759.

Chamfort: *Eloge de Molière.* Couronné par l'Académie française, 1769.

Cailhava, J. F.: *De l'Art de la comédie*, 1772, 1786.

Mercier, Sébastien: *La Maison de Molière.* A drama in five acts, imitated from Goldoni, 1776, 1788.

La Harpe: *Idées sur Molière*, 1778.

Cailhava, J. F.: *Discours prononcé par Molière le jour de sa réception posthume à l'Académie française, avec la Réponse*, 1779.

Marmontel: *Eléments de Littérature*, 1787.

Fabre d'Eglantine, P. F. N.: *Le Philinte de Molière, ou la suite du Misanthrope*, 1791.

Lemercier: *Le Tartuffe révolutionnaire, ou la suite de l'Imposteur*, 1795.

Cailhava, J. F.: *Etudes sur Molière*, 1802.

Geoffroy: *Cours de littérature dramatique.* Five volumes, 1819–1820. *Molière*, Vol. I., pp. 290–446.

Beffara, L. F.: *Dissertation sur J. B. Poquelin Molière*, 1821.

Stendhal: *Racine et Shakspere*, Part I., Chapter VIII., 1823.

Taschereau, J.: *Histoire de la vie et des ouvrages de Molière*, 1825. New and enlarged editions, 1828, 1844, 1863.

Scott, Sir Walter: *Molière;* in *The Foreign Quarterly Review*, Vol. II., pp. 306–351, 1828. Also in his *Essays on Chivalry, Romance, and the Drama.*

(b) Later Works, in Alphabetical Order[1]

Aicard, Jean: *Molière à Shakspere; prologue en vers.* With a literal translation. Paris, 1879.

Albert, Paul: *Molière;* in his *Littérature française au 17ième siècle.*

Allier, R.: *La Cabale des dévots.* Paris, 1902.

Astié, J. F.: *Molière;* in his *Louis Fourteenth and the Writers of his Age*, 1855.

Banville, T. de: *La Gloire de Molière*, 1851; in his

[1] A few works that are only of minor importance are included in this section simply because they are accessible in English, or because they deal with Molière's influence in England. From the vast mass of recent Molière literature in other languages, only some of the most important works are given. A few of the most valuable or interesting works in each class are starred.

Poésies complètes, Vol. III., 1891—*Molière chez Sardou*, 1863; in his *Poésies complètes*, Vol. I., 1891.

Bennewitz, A.: *Congreve und Moliere.* Leipzig, 1890. (Includes his previous work, *Molieres Einfluss auf Congreve.*)

Besant, Walter: *Molière;* in his *French Humourists.*

Blaze de Bury, Marie P. R. S.: *Molière and the French Classical Drama*, London, 1846.

Bourget, Paul: *Alceste;* in his *Etudes et portraits*, Vol. I.

Brunetière, F.: *Les dernières Recherches sur la vie de Molière*, 1880; in his *Etudes critiques*, Vol. I., 1888—*Trois Moliéristes;* in his *Histoire et littérature*, Vol. II., 1884—* *La Philosophie de Molière;* in his *Etudes critiques*, Vol. IV., 1891. Also in *Brunetière's Essays*, translated by D. Nichol. London, 1898—*L'Ecole des femmes*, *Tartuffe;* in his *Epoques du théâtre*, 1891.—*Molière;* in his *Manuel de l'histoire de la littérature française*, pp. 169–181, 1898—* *La Langue de Molière*, 1898; in his *Etudes critiques*, Vol. VII., 1899—*Les Epoques de la comédie de Molière;* in the *Revue des deux Mondes*, January 1, 1906.

Campardon, E.: *Documents inédits sur Molière*, 1871—*Nouvelles Pièces sur Molière*, 1876.

* Chatfield-Taylor, H. C.: *Molière; A Biography.* New York, 1906.

Clarke, Charles Cowden: *Molière-characters.* Edinburgh, 1865.

Conférences faites aux matinées classiques de l'Odéon. Thirteen volumes, 1890–1901.

Coppée, F.: *La Maison de Molière.* Poésie. Paris, 1880.

Coquelin, C.: *Molière et le Misanthrope.* Paris, 1881.—*L'Arnolphe de Molière.* Paris, 1882—*Tartuffe.* Paris, 1884—* *Molière and Shakspere;* in the *Century*, 1889, Vol. XVI., pp. 819–830—*Don Juan;* in the *International*

Quarterly, December, 1903, Vol. VIII., pp. 60–93; and in the *Revue de Paris*, April 1, 1904.

*Despois, E.: *Le Théâtre français sous Louis XIV.*, 1874.

Edwards, H. S.: *The Wife of Molière;* in his *Idols of the French Stage.*

Ehrhard, Auguste: *Les Comédies de Molière en Allemagne.* Paris, 1888.

Faguet, Emile: *Molière;* in his *Dix-septième siècle.*

Fournel, Victor: *Les Contemporains de Molière, recueil de comédies rares ou peu connues, jouées de 1650 à 1680.* Three volumes. Paris, 1863.

Fournier, Edouard: *Le Roman de Molière*, 1863—*Etudes sur la vie et les œuvres de Molière*, 1885.

France, Anatole: *La Vie littéraire*, Vol. IV., pp. 166 *et seq.;* and *passim.*

Glatigny, Albert: *Le Compliment à Molière;* à-propos en un acte. Paris, 1872.

Hartmann, R.: *Einfluss Molieres auf Drydens Komisch-dramatische Dichtungen.* Leipzig, 1885.

Hawkins, F.: *Annals of the French Stage from its Origin to the Death of Racine.* London, 1884.

Houssaye, A.: *Molière;* in his *Histoire du quarante-et-unième fauteuil de l'Académie française*, 1864—*Molière, sa femme et sa fille.* Paris, 1880.

Humbert, Charles Hugo: *Moliere, Shakspere, und die deutsche Kritik*, 1869—*Englands Urtheil über Moliere—Deutschlands Urtheil über Moliere—Moliere in England*, 1874.

Jeannel, C. J.: *La Morale de Molière.* Paris, 1867.

Jubin, George: *Molière et Cyrano;* comédie en un acte en vers. Paris, 1899.

Jusserand, J.: *Shakspere en France sous l'ancien régime.* Paris, 1899—The same, translated: *Shakspere in France under the Ancien Régime.* London, 1899.

Klette, Johann: *William Wycherleys Leben und dramatische Werke mit besonderer Berücksichtigung von Wycherley als Plagiator Molières.* 1883.

Krause, K.: *Wycherley und seine Französische Quellen.* Halle, 1883.

Lacroix, Paul: *Iconographie moliéresque.* Seconde édition. Paris, 1876.

Lamennais: *Esquisse d'une philosophie.*

* Lang, Andrew: *Molière;* in the *Encyclopædia Britannica;* and in his edition of *Les Précieuses ridicules.*

Lang, Andrew: *Molière;* in his *Letters to Dead Authors.*

Laprade, V. de: *La Morale de Molière,* 1876; in his *Essais de critique idéaliste,* 1882.

* Larroumet, Gustave: *La Comédie de Molière; l'auteur et le milieu.* Paris, 1887. (On the whole, the best single volume on Molière.) *De Molière à Marivaux,* 1887; in his *Etudes d'histoire et de critique dramatique,* 1899.

Lemaître, Jules: *La Comédie après Molière et le théâtre de Dancourt.* Paris, 1882—*Molière* (1891); in his *Poésies,* 1896—*Impressions de Théâtre,* ten volumes, 1888–1898.

Lindau, Paul: *Moliere in Deutschland.* Wien, 1867—*Moliere; eine Ergänzung seiner Biographie aus seinen Werken.* Leipzig, 1872.

Lindner, F.: *Henry Fieldings dramatische Werke,* 1895.

Livet, Charles: *Lexique de la langue de Molière—Précieux et précieuses.*

Loiseleur, Jules: *Les Points obscurs de la vie de Molière.* 1877.

Lotheissen, F.: *Moliere, sein Leben und seine Werke.* Frankfurt, 1880.

Mahrenholtz, R.: *Molieres Leben und Werke vom Standpunkt der heutigen Forschung,* 1881.

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Ancient and Modern Times: Vol. IV., *Molière and his Times.* Translated from the Danish.

Marzials, F. T.: *Molière;* in Bell's *Miniature Series of Great Writers.* London, 1906.

McCulloch, Hugh, Jr.: *Ballade of Molière;* in his *Quest of Heracles*, 1894.

Matthews, Brander: *Molière; the Life and the Legend;* in *Lippincott's Magazine*, April, 1879. Vol. XXIII., pp. 431–440—*Shakspere, Molière, and Modern English Comedy*, 1883; in his *Studies of the Stage*, 1894—*Molière en Amérique;* in *Le Moliériste*, August, 1881. Vol. III., pp. 131–6.

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Moland, Louis: *Molière et la comédie italienne.* Paris, 1867—*Molière, sa vie et ses ouvrages;* in his *Œuvres complètes de Molière*, Vol. I., Paris, 1885. Also published separately, 1887, 1892.

Le Moliériste. Revue mensuelle. Ten volumes, 1879–1889.

Moliere und Seine Bühne. Moliere-Museum. Edited by Heinrich Schweitzer. Wiesbaden, September, 1879–March, 1884.

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Oliphant, Margaret, and Tarver, Francis: *Molière.* Edinburgh, 1879.

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LES
PRECIEUSES RIDICULES

COMEDIE EN UN ACTE

18 NOVEMBRE, 1659

THE AFFECTED MISSES

OR

THE LUDICROUS LADIES OF CULTURE

A COMEDY IN ONE ACT

NOVEMBER 18, 1659

(*The original is in prose*)

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

THE *Précieuses ridicules* marks the beginning of Molière's career as a dramatist. It was almost certainly written at Paris during the first year after his return there, and was the first new play given after the establishment of his troupe under the patronage of the king's brother. It was also the first in which he abandoned the close imitation of Italian models and drew his material from observation of the life about him; and it was the one in which he began the series of attacks upon affectation, snobbishness, and sham of every kind, that filled the rest of his life.

The word *précieuse* cannot be translated; but the phrase "lady of culture" is a fair equivalent for it, in both its good and its bad meanings. This "culture" which the *précieuse* of the seventeenth century represented, had, as is usual with conscious culture-movements, been at first a valuable and much-needed reform; it had, however, been overdone and artificialised, it had been made a cult and a fad; the fad had been taken up everywhere, by unintelligent and snobbish imitators; and a healthy reaction, in favour of common-sense and even coarseness, was long overdue. Molière made this reaction triumph. More than thirty years later Boileau, in his *Tenth Satire*, speaks of

> A *précieuse*—the last
> Of those once famous wits whom Molière
> With one sure stroke of art discredited.

The *précieux* movement had begun fully fifty years before Molière's comedy appeared. In its latest and degenerate stage, when he attacked it, its chief characteristics were refinement, tending to artificiality, of language; attention to the minor trifles and to the small-talk of literature; and a style of social intercourse and of love-making for which the novels of Mlle. de Scudéry furnished the model. It is from these novels, especially *Clélie* and *Artamène*, or *Le Grand Cyrus*, that the Madelon of the play has taken her conception of the proper conduct of a love-affair, which she expounds to the great amazement of her worthy father (p. 15). In each of them the necessary dénouement is delayed through ten long volumes, and there is plenty of time for the "adventures . . . jealousies, complainings, despairs, abductions, and the rest," which Madelon so much desires. In *Le Grand Cyrus*, for instance, the heroine Mandane suffers abduction four times, not to count four unsuccessful attempts. Most of the time, however, is spent in conversation, and especially in the discussion of minor problems of love and in parlour comment upon literature. The "Map of Love's Land," by which Cathos wishes her admirers to be guided, is given in Volume I. of *Clélie*. It shows the three rivers, Esteem, Gratitude, and Inclination, on which are situated the three cities of Love: Love-on-Esteem, etc. Starting from New-Acquaintance, one may float easily down the river Inclination to Love-on-Inclination; but as the current becomes swifter one is more than likely to be carried past the town and be lost in the Dangerous Sea beyond. It is far better, though more difficult, to go across country, by way of Wit, Familiar-Verse, Polite-Epistles, Love-Notes, Sincerity, Respect, etc.—some of them villages known to Cathos—to Love-on-Esteem, though one must take care not to go too far to the right,

by way of Negligence, Lightness, and Forgetfulness, and fall into the Lake of Indifference; or, one may go to the left, avoiding the high Rock of Pride, and pass through Submissiveness, Slight-Attentions, Assiduity, Great-Services, Obedience, Constancy, etc., to Love-on-Gratitude.

In the villages of Wit, Familiar-Verse, Polite-Epistles, etc., the *précieuses* and *précieux* (ladies and gentlemen of culture) exercised themselves at all the minor literary *genres*—madrigals, rondeaux, sonnets, enigmas, impromptus—in which Mascarille boasts his prowess; and their writings were published in the "Choice Collection of Miscellanies" (*Recueil des pièces choisies*) to which Benserade, Scudéry, Boisrobert, and the great Corneille himself, among many others, contributed. In prose, the favourite exercises were letters and portraits: epistles which were meant rather for the printer than for the postman, and rather for the parlour than for the printer, and were read aloud to admiring groups; and portraits in which, impromptu (after much careful preparation), one of the company drew in words a character-sketch of another, or of himself. In one of Mlle. de Scudéry's novels a whole day (and half a volume), are devoted to this last exercise; no wonder that Madelon is "furiously fond" of it, and thinks "nothing so elegant."

In this affected society the French language, after being polished, was now being enervated; the direct and simple word was avoided, and a spade was never called a spade. Even the names of the heroines were changed, for "just plain Kate" would never fit "in cultured style." The founder of the movement, the Marquise de Rambouillet herself, was known as "the incomparable Arthénice"—Arthénice being the romantic anagram of her plain name Catherine. Mlle. de Scudéry modestly called herself Sappho. Often the assumed names

were taken from novels, as were those of Madelon (from *Le Roman de Polixène*) and Cathos (from Gomberville's *Polexandre*); even their footman has a romantic name, Almanzor, also taken from the *Polexandre*. The *précieuses* greatly overworked some words, such as the adverbs "furiously," "ferociously," "frightfully," and "awfully"; and deprived the language of others, on pretext of their being inelegant or coarse. They were especially fond of circumlocution, which sometimes went so far that their talk became unintelligible except to the initiated. Some of the expressions which they introduced became established in the language, such as "dryness of conversation" (*sécheresse de conversation*), but many of their locutions were too ridiculous to last, and fully justified Molière's satire, since some of the most extravagant which he brings into his play, such as "commodities of conversation" for chairs, and "counsellor of graces" for mirror, were actually in use at the time. Molière, the disciple of Rabelais and Montaigne, and the lover of all that was direct, exact, and expressive in language, could not well tolerate this sort of affectation.

He found the public ready and delighted to agree with him. Many of the *précieux* were of the highest rank and influence, and (probably through their efforts) Molière was not allowed to give his play for two weeks after the first performance. Then it was given forty-eight times within a year, which was a remarkable success for that day, when the established stock company, with its limited public, necessarily had a large and constantly changing repertory. Most of the true *précieux* and *précieuses* were clever enough to see that it was better policy for them to laugh at this caricature of their ridiculous imitators, than to admit by their opposition that they were themselves open to such satire. Molière, too, always clever and politic on his own

account, insisted in his preface to the play when it was published that "the true *précieuses* would be wrong to take offence when the ridiculous ones, who imitate them ill, are made fun of." But the shaft was shot. Ménage, one of the chief of the *précieux* wits, tells us in his *Memoirs* that the whole circle of the Hôtel de Rambouillet attended the first performance, and that he himself said to Chapelain at the end of the play: "Sir, you and I used to approve all the foolishness which has just been criticised so cleverly and with so much good sense; but believe me, as St. Remy said to Clovis, we must burn what we used to worship, and worship what we used to burn." "And so it came to pass, continues Ménage in his *Memoirs*, "just as I had foretold; from the day of that first performance, fustian and artificial style were done with." It is very doubtful whether Ménage's story, published thirty-four years after that first performance, can be trusted; especially since on no other occasion of his life did he show so much perspicacity. But the story is all the more significant for being probably untrue. And the effect of Molière's comedy is best shown by what one of its victims, some thirty years after, feels that it would have sounded well for him to say on that occasion. Of similar authenticity—and significance—are the stories of the old man who shouted from the pit: "Courage, Molière, that 's good comedy!"—and of Molière's own comment on his success: "I no longer need to study Plautus and Terence, or patch together the fragments of Menander. I need only study the life about me."

CHARACTERS		ACTORS
La Grange, Du Croisy	Rejected suitors.....	La Grange, Du Croisy
Gorgibus, a worthy citizen.....		L' Épy
Madelon, daughter of Gorgibus; Cathos, niece of Gorgibus	would-be fine ladies.....	Mlle. Debrie; ———
Marotte, maid to the young ladies..		Madeleine Béjart
Almanzor, footman to the young ladies..		
The Marquis of Mascarille, valet to La Grange.....		Molière
The Viscount Jodelet, valet to Du Croisy.		Jodelet
Two chair-men		
Neighbours		
Musicians		

THE AFFECTED MISSES

A COMEDY

SCENE I

La Grange, Du Croisy

DU CROISY

Mr. La Grange.

LA GRANGE

What?

DU CROISY

Just look at me a moment, and don't laugh.

LA GRANGE

Well!

DU CROISY

What do you say to our call? Are you highly pleased with it?

LA GRANGE

Have we reason to be, do you think?

DU CROISY

Not entirely, to tell the truth.

LA GRANGE

For my part, I'll own I'm quite put out about it.

Tell me, did ever anybody see a pair of impudent country wenches put on such airs, or two men treated with more disdain than we were? They could hardly bring themselves to order chairs for us. I never saw such whispering as there was between them, such yawning, such rubbing of the eyes, and such constant asking: "What o'clock is 't?" Did they answer anything but "Yes" and "No" to all that we could say to them? And in short, will you not agree with me that, had we been the meanest creatures on earth, we could not have been worse used than we were?

DU CROISY

Methinks you take the matter much to heart.

LA GRANGE

Indeed I do, and so much so that I am determined to be revenged for their impertinence. I know what made them despise us. The affectation of culture has not only infected Paris, but it has spread through the provinces, and our ridiculous misses have inhaled their fair share of it. In a word, they are a dubious compound of the coquette and the would-be lady of culture. I see what a man must be if he wants them to receive him well; and if you 'll listen to me, we 'll combine to play them a trick which shall make them see their folly, and may teach them to know who 's who a little better.

DU CROISY

And how shall this be done?

LA GRANGE

I have a certain valet, called Mascarille, who in

the estimation of many people passes for a sort of a wit; for nothing is cheaper than wit nowadays. He is an odd piece, and has taken it into his head to ape the man of quality. He has a way of priding himself on gallantry and poetry, and disdains the other valets, even so far as to call them brute beasts.

DU CROISY

Well, what do you mean to do with him?

LA GRANGE

What I mean to do with him? We must . . . . But let's leave here first.

SCENE II

GORGIBUS, DU CROISY, LA GRANGE

GORGIBUS

Well! You 've seen my niece and my daughter? Will it be a success? What is the result of your call?

LA GRANGE

That is something you may better learn from them than from us. All we can say is, that we thank you for the favour you have done us, and remain your most humble servants.

DU CROISY

Your most humble servants.

GORGIBUS, *alone*

So–ho! They seem to be going away ill-satisfied. What can be the cause of their displeasure? I must find out about it. Ho there!

SCENE III

GORGIBUS, MAROTTE

MAROTTE

What do you wish, sir?

GORGIBUS

Where are your mistresses?

MAROTTE

In their chamber.

GORGIBUS

What are they doing?

MAROTTE

Making cold cream for their lips.

GORGIBUS

There 's too much of this creamation ; tell them to come down.

SCENE IV

GORGIBUS, *alone*

I think these hussies, with all their cream and stuff, have a mind to ruin me completely. I see nothing everywhere about but whites of eggs, nun's cream, and a thousand other tomfooleries that I know nothing about. They have wasted, since we 've been here, the fat of a dozen sucking-pigs at least; and four servants might be fed every day on the sheeps' trotters they use.

SCENE V

MADELON, CATHOS, GORGIBUS

GORGIBUS

'T is mighty needful to lay out so much on greasing your snouts! Just tell me what you did to those gentlemen, that I should find them going away so dissatisfied. Did n't I order you to receive them as the men I had picked out for your husbands?

MADELON

In what estimation, my dear father, would you have us hold the irregular procedure of those persons?

CATHOS

By what manner of means, my dear uncle, could a girl endowed with the least sense of things be reconciled to such individuals?

GORGIBUS

And what fault have you to find with them?

MADELON

A fine method of courtship is theirs! What! Begin immediately by proposing marriage?

GORGIBUS

And what would you have them begin by proposing? Concubinage? Is it not a manner of procedure that you both have reason to be gratified with, as well as I? Could anything be more complimentary, and is not their desire for this holy tie a proof of their honourable intentions?

MADELON

Oh! father, what you say is the depth of vulgarity. It shames me to hear you speak in such fashion, and you ought to take a few lessons in the elegant air of things.

GORGIBUS

I have no use for the air nor for the song. I tell you marriage is a holy and sacred thing, and 't is acting honourably to begin by it.

MADELON

O Lud! If everyone were like you, how soon a romance would be ended! A fine thing 't would be if Cyrus married Mandane at once, and Aronce were straightway wedded to Clélie!

GORGIBUS

What is the girl jabbering about?

MADELON

Father, here is my cousin who can tell you as well as I that marriage must never come till after the other adventures. A lover, to be agreeable, must know how to utter fine sentiments, to breathe forth the tender, the sweet, and the impassioned; and his addresses must be made according to the rules. First, he must see at church, or in the park, or at some public ceremony, the one of whom he falls enamoured; or else he must by fateful chance be conducted to her house by some relative or friend, and come away lost in musing and melancholy. For a time he hides his passion from the beloved object, and meanwhile pays her several visits, at which some question of gallantry must without fail be brought

forward to exercise the wits of the company. Then comes the day of his declaration, which should oftenest be made in some garden-walk, while the rest of the company is at a little distance; and this declaration is followed by our sudden anger, shown in our blushes, which for a time banishes the lover from our presence. Next, he finds some means to appease us, to accustom us by insensible degrees to the recital of his passion, and to draw from us that avowal which costs us so much pain. After that come the adventures—rivals who cross and thwart an established affection, persecutions by fathers, jealousies arising from false appearances, complainings, despairs, abductions, and the rest. Thus are things conducted in high life; and these are rules which cannot be dispensed with in a genteel piece of gallantry. But to come point-blank to the conjugal union, to make love but when one makes the marriage contract, and to take the romance precisely by its tail!—I say again, father, nothing could be more like a common shop-keeper than such procedure; and my gorge rises at the mere imagination of it.[1]

GORGIBUS

What the devil of a gibberish is this I hear? There 's the grand style for you with a vengeance.

CATHOS

Beyond a doubt, dear uncle, my cousin hits the truth of the matter. How can one receive people well who have no notion whatever of gallantry! I 'll wager that they never saw the map of Love's-Land,[1]

[1] See the Introductory Note, p. 4.

and that Love-Notes, Slight-Attentions, Polite-Epistles, and Familiar-Verse are unknown countries to them. Can't you see that their whole presence shows it, and that they have not the air which gives you a good opinion of people at first sight? To come a-courting with a leg quite unadorned, a hat destitute of feathers, a head with undressed locks, and a coat that suffers an indigence of ribbons! Lud! What sort of lovers are those? What stinginess in dress, what barrenness of conversation! 'T is not to be endured, one can't abide it. I noticed likewise that their ruffs were not of the right make, and that their breeches lacked at least half a foot of being broad enough!

GORGIBUS

I think they are both gone mad, and I can understand nothing of their jargon. Cathos, and you, Madelon . . .

MADELON

Ah! pray, father, leave off those outlandish names, and call us otherwise.

GORGIBUS

How, those outlandish names? Are n't they the ones you were christened by?

MADELON

O Lud! how vulgar you are! For my part, 't is a thing that amazes me, that you could have got a daughter so clever as I. Did one ever hear, in cultured style, of Cathos or Madelon, and will you not own that one of them would be enough to disgrace the finest romance in the world?

CATHOS

'T is true, uncle, that an ear of the slightest delicacy is furiously excruciated when it hears those words pronounced; and the name of Polixena which my cousin has chosen, and that of Aminta which I have taken, possess a grace which you must needs acknowledge.[1]

GORGIBUS

Listen; one word shall settle the whole business. I won't let you have any names but those that were given you by your godfathers and your godmothers; and as for the gentlemen in question, I know their families and their fortunes, and I am determined you shall make up your minds to take them for husbands. I 'm tired of having you on my hands, and to keep a couple of girls is a bit too heavy a burden for a man of my age.

CATHOS

For my part, uncle, all I can say is that I consider marriage an altogether shocking thing. How can one endure the thought of lying by a man that 's really naked?

MADELON

Allow us a little breathing spell in the high society of Paris, where we have but just arrived. Let us weave at leisure the woof of our romance, and do not hasten its conclusion so much.

GORGIBUS, *aside*

No possible doubt of it, they are quite gone daft. (*Aloud.*) Once more, I understand nothing of all

[1] See the Introductory Note, p. 6.

this nonsense; but I am determined to be the absolute master; and, to put an end to all sorts of argument, either you shall both be married before very long, or, on my word, you shall both be nuns; I take my gospel oath on 't.

SCENE VI

CATHOS, MADELON

CATHOS

O Lud! my dear love, how is the spiritual part of your father buried in the material! How thick are the windows of his intelligence, and how dark it is in his soul!

MADELON

What would you, my dear love? I am in confusion for him. I can hardly make myself believe that I am truly his daughter, and I think some adventure will yet discover for me a more illustrious birth.

CATHOS

I can well believe so; yes, there is every probability of it; and for my own part, when I look at myself, too . . .

SCENE VII

CATHOS, MADELON, MAROTTE

MAROTTE

Here 's a lackey asking whether you 're at home; he says his master wants to see you.

MADELON

Learn, you dunce, to express yourself less vulgarly. Say: Here is a necessary evil that begs to know whether it is commodious for you to be visible.

MAROTTE

Gad! I don't know no Latin; and I've never learnt flossofy, like you did, out of the Grand Cyrus.

MADELON

The impertinent creature! How can one bear with it! But who is the master of this lackey?

MAROTTE

He said his name was the Marquis of Mascarille.

MADELON

Oh! my dear love, a marquis! Yes, go and say that we are visible. 'T is surely some wit who has heard us talked of.

CATHOS

Assuredly, my dear love.

MADELON

We must receive him in this lower room, rather than in our chamber. But at least let us arrange our hair a little, and try to do justice to our reputation. Quick, come within, and hold for us the counsellor of graces.

MAROTTE

Faith and troth, I don't know what sort of beast that be. You must talk Christian if you want me to understand you.

CATHOS

Bring us the mirror, you simpleton, and take good care not to sully its glass by the communication of your image.

SCENE VIII

MASCARILLE, TWO CHAIR-MEN

MASCARILLE[1]

Stop, porters! Hold! There, there, there, there, there! I think the rogues mean to break me in pieces by knocking me against the walls and pavements.

1ST CHAIR-MAN

Gad! 'T is because the door is narrow. Besides, you would have us come all the way in with you.

MASCARILLE

I should think so. You rascals, would you have

[1] In an account of the first performance of the play, by Mlle. Desjardins, herself a *précieuse* and a contributor to the *Choice Collection of Miscellanies*, there occurs this description of Mascarille's costume: "The Marquis entered so comically rigged out that I am sure I shall not displease you with a description of him. Imagine then a wig so long that it swept the floor each time he bowed, and a hat so small that you could plainly see he oftener carried it in his hand than on his head; his lace ruff was wide enough to make a respectable dressing-gown, and his stocking-rolls would have served admirably for children to play hide-and-seek in. A bunch of tassels hung from his pocket as if falling from a cornucopia, and his shoes were so covered with ribbons that 't is impossible for me to say whether they were of English calf or of morocco; all I know is that they were half a foot high, and I could hardly conceive how such tall and tiny heels could bear up the weight of this Marquis, with his ribbons, his rolls, and his powder."

me expose the rotundity of my feathers to the insults of the rainy season, and set the impress of my shoes upon the mud? Come, take your chair out of here.

2ND CHAIR-MAN

Then please to pay us, sir.

MASCARILLE

Eh?

2ND CHAIR-MAN

Please to give us our money, sir, I say.

MASCARILLE, *giving him a blow*

What, scoundrel, ask money of a person of my quality?

2ND CHAIR-MAN

Is that the way you pay poor folks? And will your quality help us to a dinner?

MASCARILLE

Ah! Ah! Ah! I 'll teach you to know your places! These dogs dare to make sport of me!

1ST CHAIR-MAN, *taking up one of the poles of his chair*

Now then, pay us quick.

MASCARILLE

What?

1ST CHAIR-MAN

I must have my money instantly, I say.

MASCARILLE

This fellow is reasonable.

1ST CHAIR-MAN

Quick, I say!

MASCARILLE

Yes, yes! You speak properly, you do; but the other man is a rascal who does n't know what he is talking about. There, are you satisfied?

1ST CHAIR-MAN

No, I 'm not satisfied; you gave my comrade a blow, and . . . (*raising his pole.*)

MASCARILLE

Gently; there, that is for the blow. People can get anything from me when they go the right way about it. Be off, and come back for me by-and-by to go to the Louvre, for the King's private Bed-chamber.

SCENE IX

MAROTTE, MASCARILLE

MAROTTE

The ladies will be down presently, sir.

MASCARILLE

Let them not hurry themselves; I am commodiously established here to wait for them.

SCENE X

MADELON, CATHOS, MASCARILLE, ALMANZOR

MASCARILLE, *after bowing*

Ladies, you 'll no doubt be surprised at the bold-

ness of my visit; but your reputation brings this infliction upon you, and merit has such charms for me that I pursue it everywhere.

MADELON

If you are seeking merit, 't is not on our preserves that you should hunt.

CATHOS

To find merit with us, you must have brought it hither yourself.

MASCARILLE

Ah! I enter protest against your words. Fame tells but truth in boasting of your worth; and you will piquet, repiquet, and capot all that 's gallant in Paris.

MADELON

Your complaisance carries the liberality of its praises all too far; and my cousin and I will beware of accepting for earnest the sweets of your flattery.

CATHOS

My dear love, we should order more chairs.

MADELON

Ho there, Almanzor!

ALMANZOR

Madam.

MADELON

Quick, vehiculate hither the conveniences of conversation.

MASCARILLE

But, hold, is there any safety for me here?

(*Exit Almanzor.*)

CATHOS

What is 't you fear?

MASCARILLE

Some theft of my heart, some murder of my freedom. I see here eyes that look for all the world like dangerous fellows, ready to wrong one's liberties, and to treat a heart as Turks would use a Moor. What the devil! The moment you approach them, they are up in arms to slay. Ah! my faith, I mistrust 'em! And I 'll e'en take to my heels, or else you 'll give me bonds, and well endorsed, that they sha'n't hurt me.

MADELON

Dear love, he hath a pretty wit.

CATHOS

I see that he 's a very Amilcar.[1]

MADELON

You have nothing to fear; our eyes have no evil designs, and your heart may sleep in confidence upon their honesty.

CATHOS

But, I beg you, sir, be not inexorable to that easy-chair that has been holding out its arms toward you this quarter of an hour; indulge a little its desire to embrace you.

[1] A character in Mlle. de Scudéry's *Clélie*, gallant and (supposedly) amusing.

MASCARILLE, *after having combed his wig, and arranged the lace rolls of his stockings*

Well! ladies, what say you to Paris?

MADELON

Alack! what could we say? One would have to be the antipodes of reason not to own that Paris is the great magazine of marvels, the centre of good taste and wit and gallantry.

MASCARILLE

For my part, I maintain that out of Paris there is no salvation for people of fashion.

CATHOS

That 's an indisputable truth.

MASCARILLE

'T is a bit muddy here; but then one has the sedan.

MADELON

'T is true the sedan is a marvellous safeguard against the insults of mud and bad weather.

MASCARILLE

Do you receive abundance of visits? What great wit belongs to your set?

MADELON

Alas! we are not known yet; but we are in a way to be; and we have a special friend who has promised to bring here all the gentlemen who contribute to the *Choice Collection of Miscellanies*.[1]

[1] See Introductory Note, p. 5.

CATHOS

And certain others too, whom we have heard of as being the sovereign arbiters of elegancy.

MASCARILLE

'T is I who will manage this for you better than anybody; they all frequent me, and I may say that I never rise without half a dozen wits waiting upon me.

MADELON.

O Lud! we shall be obliged to you to the last degree if you will do us that kindness; for one must necessarily be acquainted with all those gentlemen if one would have a place in the polite world. 'T is they that make reputations in Paris; and you know there are some of them whose mere acquaintance is enough to give you the name of a connoisseur, even were there no other reason for it. But for my part, what I value most, is that by means of these intellectual visits one learns a hundred things which one needs must know, and which belong to the very essence of a real wit. One learns thereby, each day, the latest gossip of gallantry, and the pretty interchanges in prose and verse. One knows just on the moment: So-and-so has composed the finest piece in the world on such-and-such a subject; this lady has written words to that air; a certain gentleman has made a madrigal upon a favour received; another has composed stanzas on an infidelity suffered; Mr. So-and-so wrote yesterday evening a sixain to Miss Such-an-one, to which she sent her answer this morning about eight o'clock; such an author has

made such-and-such a plan ; another is upon the third part of his romance ; another is putting his work through the press. This is what makes you to be thought much of in society, and if you know not these things, I would not give a pin for all the talent you may have.

CATHOS

In truth, I think 't is carrying the ridiculous to an extreme, when a person makes pretensions to wit, yet does not know even to the least little quatrain that is written every day ; and for my part, I should be in the depths of confusion should anyone ask me if I had seen something new that I had not seen.

MASCARILLE

'T is shameful, in good truth, not to have the first knowledge of everything that is written ; but do not be troubled about that ; I engage to establish an Academy of Wits in your house, and I promise you there shall not be a scrap of verse composed in Paris but you shall know it by heart before anyone else. For my part, even such as you see me, I make a pass at it when I 've a mind ; and you will find handed about, of my composition, in the cultured circles of Paris, two hundred songs, as many sonnets, four hundred epigrams, and more than a thousand madrigals, not to count riddles and portraits.

MADELON

I 'll own that I 'm furiously fond of portraits ; I think nothing is so elegant.

MASCARILLE

Portraits are difficult, and require a deep wit; you shall see some of my make that won't displease you.

CATHOS

As for me, I am terribly in love with riddles.

MASCARILLE

They exercise the wit, and I made four of them just this morning, which I 'll give you to guess.

MADELON

Madrigals are pleasant when they are neatly turned.

MASCARILLE

That is my own special talent; and I am now engaged on turning the whole of Roman history into madrigals.

MADELON

Ah! certes, that will be the very acme of beauty; I bespeak one copy at least, if you have it printed.

MASCARILLE

I promise each of you one, and in the best binding. 'T is beneath my rank; but I do it merely to give the booksellers, that pester me, a chance to make something.

MADELON

I fancy 't is a great pleasure to see oneself in print.

MASCARILLE

No doubt. But, by the way, I must recite for you an impromptu that I composed yesterday for a

duchess, a friend of mine, whom I was calling on: for I am deucedly clever at impromptus.

CATHOS

The impromptu is the very touchstone of wit.

MASCARILLE

Then listen.

MADELON

We do, with all our ears.

MASCARILLE

Oh! oh! 't is not fair play, I say;
While you I view, sans thought of harm or grief,
Your eye doth slily snatch my heart away!
Stop thief! stop thief! stop thief! stop thief!

CATHOS

Oh! my Lud! that is carried to the utmost extreme of gallantry.

MASCARILLE

All I do has an off-hand, easy style; it does n't smell of the pedant.

MADELON

'T is far from it—more than two thousand leagues away.

MASCARILLE

Did you notice that beginning? *Oh! oh!* That is something extraordinary, *oh! oh!* Like a man that bethinks himself on a sudden, *oh! oh!* Taken by surprise, *oh! oh!*

MADELON

Yes, I think that *oh ! oh !* admirable.

MASCARILLE

It seems a mere nothing.

CATHOS

O Lud ! how can you say so ? 'T is those sort of things that are beyond price.

MADELON

No doubt on 't, and I 'd rather have composed that *oh ! oh !* than an epic poem.

MASCARILLE

Egad ! your taste is good.

MADELON

Eh ! 't is not altogether bad.

MASCARILLE

But do you not admire also *'t is not fair play, I say? 'T is not fair play, I say ;* you took me off my guard, I was not watching. A natural and familiar way of speaking, *'t is not fair play, I say. While you I view*, that is to say, I stand at gaze, I consider you, observe you, contemplate you. *Sans thought of harm or grief*, that is, innocently, without malice, like a poor silly sheep. *Your eye doth slily snatch . . .* What do you think of that expression *slily snatch* ? Is it not well chosen ?

CATHOS

Perfectly.

MASCARILLE

Slily snatch, as if from hiding; 't would seem as 't were a cat, in the very act of catching a mouse . . . *slily snatch.*

MADELON

Nothing could be better.

MASCARILLE

Doth slily snatch my heart away, carries it off, robs, abducts, steals it from me. *Stop thief! stop thief! stop thief! stop thief!* Would n't you think it was a man shouting and running after a thief to have him stopped? *Stop thief! stop thief! stop thief! stop thief!*

MADELON

It must be confessed that that has a most witty and gallant turn.

MASCARILLE

I 'll sing the air I 've composed for it.

CATHOS

Have you learnt music?

MASCARILLE

I? By no means.

CATHOS

Then how is this possible?

MASCARILLE

People of quality know everything without having ever learnt anything.

MADELON, *to Cathos*

Assuredly, my dear love.

MASCARILLE

See whether you find the air to your taste. *Ahem, ahem. La, la, la, la, la.* The brutality of the season has ferociously injured the delicacy of my voice. But no matter. 'T is in an easy, off-hand style. (*Singing*)

Oh ! oh ! 't is not fair play . . . . etc.

CATHOS

Ah ! that is indeed an impassioned air. Does it not kill you with delight?

MADELON

Yes, and there 's chromatics in it.

MASCARILLE

Don't you find the thought well expressed by the music? *Stop thief !* . . . And then, as if shouting at the top of one's voice, *stop, stop, stop, stop, stop, stop thief !* And then suddenly, like a person out of breath, *stop thief !*

MADELON

This it is to know the refinement of things, the grand refinement, the refinement of refinements. 'T is all marvellous, I assure you ; I am enchanted with both air and words.

CATHOS

I never before saw anything so strong.

MASCARILLE

All that I do comes to me naturally, 't is unstudied.

MADELON

Nature has treated you as a fond mother indeed, and you are her spoiled child.

MASCARILLE

In what way do you pass your time, ladies?

CATHOS

No way at all.

MADELON

We have lived till now in a frightful fast from pleasures.

MASCARILLE

I am at your service to take you to the play one of these days, if you like; the more so as a new one is to be given, which I shall be very glad to have you see with me.

MADELON

'T is impossible to refuse.

MASCARILLE

But I beg you to applaud in proper fashion when we are there; for I have promised to cry up the play, and the author came to me again this morning to beg me to. 'T is the custom here that authors should come and read their new pieces to us people of quality, that they may win us to approve of them, and give them a reputation; and I leave you to im-

agine whether, when we say anything, the pit dare contradict us! As for me, I am most scrupulous in these matters; and when I have given my word to a poet I always shout: Excellent! before the candles are lighted.

MADELON

Oh! don't speak of it; Paris is an admirable place; a hundred things happen here every day which you cannot know in the provinces, however much a wit you may be.

CATHOS

Enough; since we have been told, we will do our duty, and cry out properly at every word that 's spoken.

MASCARILLE

I don't know whether I 'm mistaken; but you look for all the world as if you had written a play.

MADELON

Eh! there may be something in what you say.

MASCARILLE

Ah! my faith, we must see it. Between ourselves, I have composed one that I mean to have acted.

CATHOS

Ah! . . . and to what players will you give it?

MASCARILLE

A pretty question! To the Royal Troup[1]; none

[1] That is, the actors of the Hôtel de Bourgogne, Molière's chief rivals. They were more successful in tragedy than Molière, to his

but they can make things succeed; the others are ignorant fellows who speak their parts exactly as people talk; they don't know how to roll out a thunderous line, and pause at the fine passage; and how is one to know where the fine line is, if the player does n't stop at it and show us when to applaud?

CATHOS

Indeed, that is the way to make an audience feel the beauties of a work; and things succeed only so far as they are well set off.

MASCARILLE

How do you like my trimmings? Do you find them congruent to the coat?

CATHOS

Completely so.

MASCARILLE

The ribbon is well chosen.

MADELON

Furiously well. 'T is genuine Perdrigeon.

MASCARILLE

What do you say to my stocking-rolls?

MADELON

They are altogether stylish.

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great chagrin, for it was his life-long ambition to succeed in serious plays, and he was constantly presenting tragedy as well as comedy at his theatre, especially during the first part of his career. But his acting was too realistic for the taste of his age, which could not take tragic actors seriously if they spoke their parts "exactly as people talk."

MASCARILLE

At least I may boast that they are a full quarter of a yard wider than any yet made.

MADELON

I must own I have never seen elegance of attire carried to such a height.

MASCARILLE

Just fasten the functions of your olfactory sense upon these gloves.

MADELON

They smell awfully good.

CATHOS

I never breathed a scent of higher quality.

MASCARILLE

And this one? (*He leans over and lets them smell the powdered hair of his wig.*)

MADELON

'T is unmistakably aristocratic; the upper region is deliciously titillated by it.

MASCARILLE

You 've said nothing of my feathers; how do you find them?

CATHOS

Frightfully handsome.

MASCARILLE

Do you know, every tip cost me a gold louis. As

for me, 't is a passion with me always to go in for whatever 's most elegant.

MADELON

I assure you we are sympathetic natures, and I 'm furiously delicate in everything I wear; even to my under-socks, I cannot endure anything unless it be of the best make.

MASCARILLE, *crying out suddenly*

Oh! oh! oh! Gently. Damme, ladies, 't is very ill done; I have reason to complain of your behaviour, 't is not fair.

CATHOS

How now? What is the matter?

MASCARILLE

What! Both of you against my heart at once! Attacking me right and left! Ah! 't is against the law of nations; the match is not equal, and I shall cry out "Murder!"

CATHOS

One must confess that he says things in a way that is quite his own.

MADELON

He has an admirable turn of wit.

CATHOS

You are more frightened than hurt, and your heart cries out before its skin is scratched.

MASCARILLE

What the devil! It 's skinned from head to foot.

SCENE XI

CATHOS, MADELON, MASCARILLE, MAROTTE

MAROTTE

Madam, someone is asking for you.

MADELON

Who?

MAROTTE

The Viscount Jodelet.

MASCARILLE

The Viscount Jodelet?

MAROTTE

Yes, sir.

CATHOS

Do you know him?

MASCARILLE

He 's my best friend.

MADELON

Show him in speedily.

MASCARILLE

'T is a long time since we have seen other, and I am charmed at this chance meeting.

CATHOS

Here he is.

SCENE XII

CATHOS, MADELON, JODELET, MASCARILLE, MAROTTE, ALMANZOR

MASCARILLE

Ah! Viscount!

(*They embrace each other.*)

JODELET

Ah! Marquis!

MASCARILLE

How happy I am to meet with you!

JODELET

What joy is mine to find you here!

MASCARILLE

Just kiss me a bit more, I beg you.

MADELON, *to Cathos*

My dearest, we are beginning to be known; the polite world is finding its way to our door.

MASCARILLE

Ladies, allow me to introduce this gentleman; on my word, he is worthy of your acquaintance.

JODELET

'T is but justice to come and pay you your dues, and your charms assert their seigniorial rights over all sorts of persons.

MADELON

This is carrying your civilities to the utmost bounds of flattery.

CATHOS

This day should be marked in our calendar as a most happy day.

MADELON, *to Almanzor*

Come, boy, must we be always repeating things to you? Don't you see we need the superaddition of an arm-chair?

MASCARILLE

Do not be astonished at seeing the Viscount look as he does. He has but just recovered from an illness, which has made his face as pale as you see it.

JODELET

It is the fruit of late attendance at court, and of the fatigues of war.

MASCARILLE

Do you know, ladies, that you see in the Viscount one of the valiant men of his century? He is a complete hero.

JODELET

You are no whit behind me, Marquis, and we know also what you can do.

MASCARILLE

It is true that we have seen each other in action.

JODELET

And in places where 't was very warm.

MASCARILLE, *looking at the two girls*

Yes, but not so warm as here. Ha, ha, ha!

JODELET

Our acquaintance began in the army, and the first time we saw each other he was commanding a regiment of cavalry on board the galleys of Malta.

MASCARILLE

That is true; but still you were in service before I was, and I remember I was but a petty officer when you were in command of two thousand horse.

JODELET

War is a fine thing; but 'pon honour, nowadays men who have seen service, as we have, are mighty ill rewarded at court.

MASCARILLE

And that 's why I mean to hang up my sword.

CATHOS

As for me, I have a furious weakness for military men.

MADELON

I adore them, too; but I would have wit to wait on courage.

MASCARILLE

Viscount, do you remember that half-moon we won from the enemy at the siege of Arras?

JODELET

What do you mean with your half-moon? Why, man, 't was a good full one, no less.

MASCARILLE

I believe you are right.

JODELET

I ought to remember it, 'pon honour! I got a wound there in the leg from a hand-grenade, that I bear the marks of still. Just feel it, I beg you; you 'll see what a wound it was.

CATHOS, *after having touched the place*

'T is true, the scar is large.

MASCARILLE

Give me your hand a moment, and feel this one, there, exactly at the back of the head. Do you find it?

MADELON

Yes, I feel something.

MASCARILLE

That is a musket-wound I got in my last campaign.

JODELET, *baring his chest*

Here is another wound which pierced me quite through the body at the attack on Gravelines.

MASCARILLE

I will show you a furious cut.

MADELON

'T is not necessary; we believe it without seeing.

MASCARILLE

These are honourable scars which prove what one is.

CATHOS

We have no doubt of what you are.

MASCARILLE

Viscount, is your carriage here?

JODELET

Why?

MASCARILLE

We could take these ladies driving outside the gates, and offer them a little entertainment.

MADELON

We cannot go abroad to-day.

MASCARILLE

Then let us have musicians and dance.

JODELET

'Pon honour, 't is well thought on.

MADELON

As for that, we shall be pleased; but there must be some increase of company.

MASCARILLE

Ho there! Champagne, Picard, Bourguignon, Cascaret, Basque, La Verdure, Lorrain, Provençal, La Violette! The devil take all lackeys. I think there 's not a gentleman in France worse served than I am. These scoundrels are always leaving me alone.

MADELON

Almanzor, tell the gentleman's servants to go seek for musicians, and fetch the gentlemen and ladies from hereabouts, to people the solitude of our ball.

(*Exit Almanzor.*)

MASCARILLE

Viscount, what do you say of those eyes?

JODELET

And you, Marquis, what think you of them?

MASCARILLE

For my part, I say that our freedom will have much ado to get away clear and clean. At least I am strangely pulled this way and that, and my heart holds but by a single thread.

MADELON

How natural is all that he says! He gives a most pleasing turn to everything.

CATHOS

'T is true, he makes a furious outlay of wit.

MASCARILLE

To show you my true quality, I will make an impromptu upon it. (*He meditates.*)

CATHOS

Oh! I beseech you with all the devotion of my heart, let us have something that was composed for us.

JODELET

I wish I might do as much; but I am a little exhausted in my poetic vein, from the great number of bleedings I have given it these past few days.

MASCARILLE

Oh, the deuce! I always get the first line well enough; but I have trouble in making the others fit it.

Faith, this is a little too sudden ; I will make you an impromptu at my leisure, and you shall find it the finest in the world.

JODELET

He has the very devil of a wit.

MADELON

And gallant, and well turned.

MASCARILLE

Viscount, just tell me ; is it long since you have seen the Countess ?

JODELET

It 's more than three weeks since I 've called on her.

MASCARILLE

Do you know, the Duke came to see me this morning, and would have taken me down into the country to hunt a stag with him.

MADELON

Here come our friends.

SCENE XIII

LUCILE, CELIMENE, CATHOS, MADELON, MASCARILLE, JODELET, MAROTTE, ALMANZOR, Musicians

MADELON

Lud, my dear loves, we ask your pardon. These gentlemen took a fancy to put heart into our heels ; and we sent for you to fill the voids of our assembly.

LUCILE

We are indeed obliged to you.

MASCARILLE

This is only a ball arranged in haste, but some day we will offer you one in due form. Are the musicians come?

ALMANZOR

Yes, sir; they are here.

CATHOS

Come then, my dear loves, take your places.

MASCARILLE, *dancing alone by way of prelude*

La, la, la, la, la, la, la, la.

MADELON

He has a perfectly elegant shape.

CATHOS

And looks to dance most properly.

MASCARILLE, *leading out Madelon to dance*

My freedom will dance the Courant as well as my feet. In time, fiddlers; in time. Oh! What boobies! 'T is impossible to dance with them. The devil take you! Can't you play in measure? La, la, la, la, la, la, la, la. Steady. O you country scrapers!

JODELET, *dancing also*

So, so! don't hurry the time so much; I have just recovered from an illness.

SCENE XIV

DU CROISY, LA GRANGE, CATHOS, MADELON, LUCILE, CELIMENE, JODELET, MASCARILLE, MAROTTE, Musicians

LA GRANGE, *stick in hand*

Ah! ah! you scoundrels! What are you doing here? We 've been hunting for you these three hours.

MASCARILLE, *feeling the blows*

Oh! oh! oh! you did n't tell me there 'd be blows in the bargain.

JODELET

Oh! oh! oh!

LA GRANGE

The idea of you, you scamp, trying to play the man of consequence!

DU CROISY

That 'll teach you to know your places.

SCENE XV

CATHOS, MADELON, LUCILE, CELIMENE, MASCARILLE, JODELET, MAROTTE, Musicians

MADELON

What is the meaning of this?

JODELET

'T is on a wager.

CATHOS

What! Let yourselves be beaten in such fashion!

MASCARILLE

Gad! I did n't want to take any notice of it; for

I am of a violent temper, and I should have lost my self-control.

MADELON

Suffer such an affront in our presence!

MASCARILLE

'T is nothing; let us go on just the same. We have known them a long while; and between friends one should not take offence at such a trifle.

SCENE XVI

DU CROISY, LA GRANGE, MADELON, CATHOS, CELIMENE, LUCILE, MASCARILLE, JODELET, MAROTTE, Musicians

LA GRANGE

On my word, you rascals, you shall not make sport of us, I promise you. Come in, you there.

(*Enter three or four bullies.*)

MADELON

What means this impudence, to come and disturb us so in our own house?

DU CROISY

What, ladies! Shall we suffer our own lackeys to be better received than ourselves, and let them make love to you at our expense, and give you a ball?

MADELON

Your lackeys?

LA GRANGE

Yes, our lackeys; 't is neither handsome nor honourable to spoil good servants for us as you are doing.

MADELON

O heavens! what insolence!

LA GRANGE

But they shall not have the advantage of using our clothes to capture your fancy with; and if you are determined to love them, on my word, it shall be for their own fine looks. Quick, let them be stripped at once.

JODELET

Farewell our finery.

MASCARILLE

Thus are the Marquisate and Viscountship laid low.

DU CROISY

Ah! ah! you rascals, will you have the impudence to poach on our preserves? You must go and seek elsewhere the means of making yourselves agreeable in the eyes of your mistresses, I 'll have you know.

LA GRANGE

'T is too much to supplant us, and that too with our own clothes.

MASCARILLE

O Fortune! how great is thy inconstancy!

DU CROISY

Quick, strip them down to the least thing.

LA GRANGE

Carry off all these duds, and be quick about it. Now, ladies, in the condition they are in, you may

continue your amours with them as much as you please. As to that we leave you entire freedom, and we both protest to you that we shall not be jealous in the least.

SCENE XVII

MADELON, CATHOS, JODELET, MASCARILLE, Musicians

CATHOS

Oh! what humiliation!

MADELON

I am bursting with spite.

ONE OF THE MUSICIANS, *to the Marquis*

How is this now? Where do we come in, and who's going to pay us?

MASCARILLE

Ask the Viscount.

ONE OF THE MUSICIANS, *to Jodelet*

Who will give us our money?

JODELET

Ask the Marquis.

SCENE XVIII

GORGIBUS, MADELON, CATHOS, JODELET, MASCARILLE, Musicians

GORGIBUS

Ah, you jades, you 've got us into a fine pickle, by what I can make out; and I 've learned of great

doings indeed from those gentlemen who have just gone.

MADELON

Oh! father, 't is a cruel trick they have played us.

GORGIBUS

Yes, it 's a cruel trick, but you may thank your own foolish impudence for it, you sluts! They have paid back the usage you gave them, and I, worse luck, must swallow the insult.

MADELON

Ah! I swear we 'll be revenged, or I shall perish in the attempt. And you, you rogues, dare you stay here after your insolence?

MASCARILLE

Treat a marquis in such fashion! That is the way of the world. The least misfortune changes love to scorning. Come, comrade, let 's go seek our fortunes elsewhere. I see that here they care for naught but vain show, and hold in no esteem mere naked virtue.

(*Exeunt both.*)

SCENE XIX

GORGIBUS, MADELON, CATHOS, Musicians

ONE OF THE MUSICIANS

Sir, we expect you to pay us, since they have failed to, for our playing here.

GORGIBUS, *beating them*

Yes, yes, I 'll pay you; and this is the coin I 'll

pay you in. And you, you hussies, I don't know what keeps me from doing as much by you. We shall be the common talk and laughing-stock of everybody; and that is what you've brought upon yourselves by your tomfooleries. Go hide yourselves, you worthless baggages; go hide yourselves forever. (*Alone.*) And you, that are the cause of their folly, silly trumpery, pernicious pastimes of empty minds, romances, verses, songs, sonnets, and sonnettas, the devil take you all!

DON JUAN

OU

LE FESTIN DE PIERRE

COMEDIE EN CINQ ACTES

15 FEVRIER, 1665

DON JUAN

OR

THE STONE GUEST

A COMEDY IN FIVE ACTS

FEBRUARY 15, 1665

(*The original is in prose*)

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

Tartuffe, in its first form, was already written. Three acts of it had been given before the court at Versailles in May, 1664, and again at Villers-Cotterets in September; and the full five acts had perhaps been given in private. The "cabal" had proved too strong, however, and the king, probably against his own inclination, had felt compelled to forbid the performance of *Tartuffe* in public. Molière had to wage a five-years' war before he obtained permission to produce his masterpiece, in its final form.

Don Juan is one of the campaigns in this five-years' war. It is not primarily or chiefly that, however. It is primarily a play written to take advantage of the passing vogue of a popular subject, and furnish a successful drama to Molière's troupe, for which he had constantly to provide, whether *Tartuffe* could be given or not. And, chiefly, it is the creation of a character-type destined to live and to be often re-created in later literature and art.

The subject—a young libertine dragged down to his punishment by the stone statue of a man whom he has wronged and killed—was already hackneyed. The old folk-story, early localised in Spain, had been dramatised there by Tirso de Molina as early as 1620. It had had two dramatic versions in Italy, one of which (or a partly improvised drama founded rather closely upon it) had been given by the Italian actors established at Paris, and had proved exceedingly popular. It had also been given

in two French versions, both following more or less closely one of the Italian dramas, not long before Molière took it up; and was given after him in two other French versions still, one of them being a play in verse by Thomas Corneille, which was simply a rhymed revision of Molière's prose.

Just as Shakspere had done in *Hamlet*, and as Goethe was to do in *Faust*, so Molière in taking up a popular legend, already dramatised before him, gave to it a philosophical and a human significance which it had not had before, and created a permanent type of character. This comparison is hardly fair to Molière, however, since the play by no means holds as important a relative place in his work as *Hamlet* in Shakspere's or *Faust* in Goethe's; and since in treating a legend of marvel and terror he was going entirely out of his natural province (as Shakspere and Goethe were not), and could not take that element of his subject with any seriousness. Moreover, *Don Juan* is the worst constructed among Molière's important plays, as *Hamlet* is among Shakspere's; and this fault is of more relative importance in the case of Molière than in that of Shakspere.

In spite of these reservations, *Don Juan* is full of interest and significance. Molière makes the most and best of the comic elements, naturally. His valet Sganarelle—the rôle which he played himself—is essentially his own creation, and is a sort of Sancho Panza to the anything but Quixotic gentleman Don Juan; Sganarelle's assumption of philosophy, and the slightly overdone elegance and artificiality of his language, in his constant aping of the style of men of rank—only to fall back into his native speech in moments of terror—are among the best examples of Molière's dramatic style.

But the character of Don Juan himself Molière has treated with a seriousness unknown to any of his predecessors except Tirso de Molina, and with a depth unknown to any. And those who came after him have consciously or unconsciously owed him much, whether they reverted to a simpler type, like Mozart and his Italian-American librettist Da Ponte, and like Byron (much as Byron added to the conception, too, of fresh life and energy), or whether they ran into the exaggeratedly modern, like Musset and (save the mark!) Mr. Bernard Shaw. And in spite of the lasting popularity of the type, largely due to Molière, his conception of it remains unique. The essential character of his *Don Juan* is not sensuality; it is power unaccompanied by any sense of duty or responsibility. Sensual indulgence is merely one chief way of using that power. In Molière's *Don Juan* feudal power and prestige remain; feudal obligation is gone. We must not read too much democracy into the play, and must not forget that Molière was no revolutionist; yet what could be plainer and more telling than the serious speech of Don Juan's father in the fourth act: "Birth is nothing where virtue is not. . . . Virtue is the prime title of nobility; I care much less for the name one signs than for the deeds one does; and I should feel more esteem for the son of a porter who was a true man, than for the son of a king who lived as you do." The real subject of the play is clearly stated in the first scene of the first act, when Sganarelle, quite serious for once, says in describing Don Juan's character: "A wicked nobleman is a terrible thing."

And the height of all wickedness is hypocrisy. It is religious hypocrisy that Molière would have defined as "the last resort of a scoundrel." In the last act of the

play, in picturing his Don Juan turned hypocrite, Molière makes occasion to strike another telling blow at the "cabal" which was preventing his *Tartuffe* from being given. But *Don Juan* had only fifteen representations, and it was to be four years still before the public performance of *Tartuffe* was permitted.

CHARACTERS	ACTORS[1]
Don Juan, son of Don Louis	La Grange
Sganarelle, valet to Don Juan	Molière
Elvire, wife of Don Juan	Mlle. Duparc
Gusman, equerry to Elvire	
Don Carlos, Don Alonzo } brothers of Elvire	
Don Louis, father of Don Juan	Béjart
Charlotte, Mathurine } peasant girls	Mlle. Molière, Mlle. Debrie
Pierrot, a peasant, in love with Charlotte	Hubert
The Statue of the Commandant	
La Violette, Ragotin } lackeys of Don Juan	
M. Dimanche, a tradesman	Du Croisy
La Ramée, a bravo	Debrie
A Beggar	
Suite of Don Juan	
Suite of Don Carlos and Don Alonzo	
Spectre	

The scene is in Sicily.

[1] The distribution of the rôles is conjectural, but highly probable for those of Don Juan, Charlotte, and Mathurine, and certain for that of Sganarelle. (Moland)

DON JUAN

OR

THE STONE GUEST

ACT I

A Palace

SCENE I

SGANARELLE, GUSMAN

SGANARELLE, *with a snuff-box in his hand*

Let Aristotle and all your philosophers say what they like, there is nothing to be compared with tobacco; 't is the passion of all people of quality, and he that lives without tobacco is not fit to live. It not only exhilarates and clears the human brain, but likewise breeds virtue in the soul; and through its fellowship one learns to be a gentleman. Have you not observed how, the moment a man takes it, he becomes affable to everybody, and is delighted to share it right and left, wherever he may be? He does not even wait to be asked for it, but forestalls people's wishes. So true it is that tobacco inspires sentiments of honour and virtue in all who partake of

it. But enough of this argument, let us return to the matter we were talking of. So 't is true, then, my dear Gusman, that your mistress, Donna Elvire, surprised at our departure, has set forth in search of us; and her heart, which my master has touched all too deeply, could not endure but she must come to seek for him here. Shall I tell you what I think, between you and me? I fear that she 'll be ill requited for her love, that her journey to this place will bear little fruit, and that 't would have served you as well had you never stirred from home.

GUSMAN

Why so? Tell me, will you, Sganarelle, what can give you such an ill-boding fear? Has your master opened his heart to you, and told you it was coldness toward us that drove him away?

SGANARELLE

No, no; but a look at the country tells me how the land lies; and without his having said anything yet, I could almost wager that 's the way the road runs. I may perhaps be mistaken; but anyhow, in these matters I have had enough experience to give me some insight.

GUSMAN

What! Can this unexpected departure mean faithlessness on the part of Don Juan? Could he so wrong the pure love of Donna Elvire?

SGANARELLE

No, but he is still young, and his heart is not . . .

GUSMAN

Could a man of his quality be guilty of so base an action?

SGANARELLE

Oh, his quality! That 's a fine reason, and like indeed to give him pause!

GUSMAN

But he is bound by the sacred ties of wedlock.

SGANARELLE

Ah! my poor Gusman, believe me, my good friend, you know not yet what a man is Don Juan.

GUSMAN

'T is true I don't know what sort of man he may be, if he can have done us this wrong; and I cannot conceive how, after showing so much love and such impatience, after all his fervent homage, his vows, his sighs, his tears, his passionate letters, his ardent protestations and oft-repeated oaths, after such transports and eagerness as he showed, after forcing, in his passion, even the sacred obstacle of a convent, to bring Donna Elvire within his power; I cannot conceive, I say, how, after all that, he could have the heart to break his word.

SGANARELLE

I have no great trouble in conceiving it, I can tell you; and, if you knew the fellow, you would find the thing simple enough for him. I do not say that his feelings for Donna Elvire have changed, I am not sure of it yet. You know that by his orders I

set out before him; and since his arrival he has not talked with me; but by way of precaution I 'll tell you, *inter nos*, that you have in my master Don Juan the greatest scoundrel the earth ever bore, a madman, a dog, a devil, a Turk, a heretic, who believes neither in Heaven nor Hell nor Hobgoblin, who spends his life like the beasts that perish, a swine of Epicurus, a very Sardanapalus, who stops his ears to all the remonstrances that can be made, and treats all we believe in as old wives' tales. You say he has married your mistress; believe me, he would have done more than that for his passion, and with her would have married you too, and her dog and her cat. A marriage costs him nothing; he uses no other snare to catch the fair sex; he is a marrier of all maids. Fine lady, young miss, town maid, or country lass, there is nothing too hot nor too cold for him; and if I were to tell you the names of those he has married in different places, 't would be a chapter to last until midnight. You seem surprised and turn pale at my words; yet this is only an outline sketch of the man; and to complete his portrait would require far heavier strokes. I tell you the wrath of Heaven must crush him some day; 't were far better for me to serve the devil than him, and he makes me witness to so many horrors that I could wish him already —I won't say where. But a wicked nobleman is a terrible thing. I must be faithful to him in my own despite; fear does the office of zeal in me, bridles my feelings, and often brings me so low as to applaud what my soul detests. See, here he comes for a walk in this palace; let us part. But listen: I have trusted you frankly with this confidence, it

slipped off my tongue a bit too quickly; but if anything of it were to reach his ears, I should flatly declare you had lied.

SCENE II

DON JUAN, SGANARELLE

DON JUAN

Who was that talking with you? Methinks he looks very like our honest Gusman, Donna Elvire's servant.

SGANARELLE

'T is in fact something near that.

DON JUAN

What? 'T is he?

SGANARELLE

He himself.

DON JUAN

How long has he been here?

SGANARELLE

Since yesterday evening.

DON JUAN

What brings him?

SGANARELLE

I think you can guess well enough what makes him anxious.

DON JUAN

Our departure, no doubt?

SGANARELLE

The honest man is quite heart-broken about it, and was asking me the cause of it.

DON JUAN

And how did you answer him?

SGANARELLE

That you had told me nothing of it.

DON JUAN

But come now, what do you think about it yourself? What is your own idea?

SGANARELLE

I? I think, and no offence to you, that you have some new love affair on hand.

DON JUAN

You think so?

SGANARELLE

Yes.

DON JUAN

On my word, you are not far wrong; I will own that another love has driven Elvire from my thoughts.

SGANARELLE

Lord, yes! I have my Don Juan at my fingers' ends, and I know your heart for the greatest rover in the world: 't is pleased to run from bondage to bondage, and likes not to stay in one place.

DON JUAN

And, tell me, do you not think I am right in this?

SGANARELLE

Oh! Sir . . .

DON JUAN

What? Speak up.

SGANARELLE

Surely you are right, if you have a mind to it; there is no gainsaying that. But, if you had not a mind to it, perhaps 't would be different.

DON JUAN

Well! I give you leave to speak and tell me what you think.

SGANARELLE

In that case, sir, I will tell you frankly that I don't approve of your ways, and think it a base thing to make love right and left as you do.

DON JUAN

What! Would you have a man bind himself forever to the first beauty that captivates him, renounce the world for her, and never more have eyes for any other? 'T is a fine thing indeed to pride oneself on the false honour of being faithful, to bury oneself forever in one passion, and from our very youth to be dead to all the other beauties that may meet our eyes! No, no. Constancy is fit only for fools; all the fair sex have the right to charm us, and the good fortune of one in being met with first ought not to rob the others of their just claims on our hearts. For my part, beauty enraptures me wherever I find it, and I readily yield to the gentle violence with which it doth ravish us.

Even though I 'm bound to one fair charmer, the love I may feel for her does not compel my heart to do injustice to the others; I still have eyes to see the worth of all, and I pay to each the homage and the tribute that nature demands of us. I cannot refuse my heart to any lovely creature I behold, and as soon as a fair face asks it, had I ten thousand hearts I 'd give them all. Love at its birth hath unexpressible charms, and all the pleasure of it lies in change. It is the quintessence of happiness to conquer, by a hundred acts of homage, the heart of a young beauty; to watch day by day the small advances that one makes; to combat, by raptures, tears, and sighs, the innocent modesty of a heart loath to surrender; to overcome, step by step, all the little obstacles that she sets in our way, to conquer the scruples on which she prides herself, and to lead her gently whither we 've a mind to bring her. But once you are master, there's nothing more to say or to wish for; all the charm of passion is past, and in the calm of such a love we simply fall asleep, unless some new object come to reawaken our desires and to set before our heart the attractions of a conquest still to be made. In fine, there 's nothing so sweet as to triumph over the resistance of a fair one; I share in this the ambition of famous conquerors who fly forever from victory to victory and cannot resolve to set bounds to their desires. There 's nothing can stay the impetuosity of my fancies, I feel my heart ready to love the whole world; and, like Alexander, I could wish there were other worlds, that I might extend to them my amorous conquests.

SGANARELLE

Mercy on us, how you hold forth! It sounds as if

you had learnt it by heart; you talk just like a book.

DON JUAN

What do you say to it?

SGANARELLE

On my word, I say . . . I don't know what to say; for you turn things in such a way that you seem to be right; and at the same time 't is sure you are not. I had the finest thoughts in the world, and your speech has tangled them all up. Let me alone; another time I 'll put my arguments in writing, to dispute with you.

DON JUAN

You 'll do well to.

SGANARELLE

But, sir, would it be within the permission you have given me, if I were to tell you that I am just a bit scandalised at the life you lead?

DON JUAN

How! What life do I lead?

SGANARELLE

Oh, an excellent life! But, for instance, seeing you marry every month as you do . . .

DON JUAN

Is there anything pleasanter?

SGANARELLE

True. I can conceive that it is most pleasant and diverting, and I should like it well enough myself, if

there were no harm in it; but, sir, to trifle thus with a holy sacrament, and . . .

DON JUAN

Go to, 't is an affair between Heaven and me, and we can settle it well enough together, without your troubling yourself about it.

SGANARELLE

On my word, sir, I have always heard that 't is a sorry jest to mock at Heaven, and that infidels come to no good end.

DON JUAN

Pooh! Master blockhead, you know I've told you that I love not your remonstrance-makers.

SGANARELLE

That is just why I was n't saying this to you, God forbid! You know what you are about; and if you are an infidel, you have your own reasons; but there are certain puny coxcombs in the world, who are infidels without knowing why, who set up for free-thinkers because they imagine it becomes them; and if I had a master of that sort, I should look him straight in the face and say to him flatly: "How dare you thus make mock of Heaven? Do you not tremble to scoff as you do at the most holy things? Is it for you, tiny earthworm, wee pigmy that you are" (I am speaking to the master aforesaid), "is it for you to ridicule what all men revere? Do you think that because you are of noble birth, because you have a blond and well-curled wig, feathers in your hat, a coat covered with gold lace, and flame-

coloured ribbons" ('t is not to you I am speaking, but to the other); "do you think, I say, that you are the wiser man for it, and that you may do anything you like, and that no one shall dare to tell you home truths? Learn from me, your valet, that Heaven punishes the impious sooner or later, that an evil life brings an evil death, and that . . .

DON JUAN

Silence!

SGANARELLE

What is the matter?

DON JUAN

The matter is, I would have you know that I am in love with a fair lady, and 't is her charms that have brought me to this town.

SGANARELLE

And have you nothing to fear, sir, from the death of the Commandant whom you killed here six months ago?

DON JUAN

And what should I fear? Was n't he fairly killed?

SGANARELLE

Fairly killed, yes indeed, it could n't have been done more thoroughly; and he 'd be in the wrong to complain.

DON JUAN

I had my pardon for the affair.

SGANARELLE

Yes; but perhaps that pardon does not satisfy the resentment of his relatives and friends; and . . .

DON JUAN

Oh! let us not trouble ourselves with thinking of the ill that may happen to us; let us think only of what may give us pleasure. The person I mean is a young girl engaged to be married, a most charming creature, who was brought here by the man she is to marry, and I had the luck to meet this pair of lovers three or four days before they set out. Never did I see two people so happy in each other, or who showed deeper affection. The evident tenderness of their mutual passion excited me; I was struck to the heart by it, and my love began in jealousy. Yes, from the very first I could hardly endure seeing them so happy together; my vexation awakened my desires; and I pictured to myself the utmost pleasure if I could succeed in spoiling their good understanding, and breaking off this attachment, by which the delicate feelings of my heart were offended; but as yet all my efforts have been in vain, and I must try my last resource. To-day this would-be bridegroom is to treat his mistress to a sail. I have told you nothing about it; but everything is made ready to gratify my love; I have engaged a small boat and some men, by which means I hope to carry off the fair one easily.

SGANARELLE

Oh! Sir . . .

DON JUAN

Well?

SGANARELLE

'T is mighty well done of you, and you are acting

as you should. There is nothing in this world like getting what you want.

DON JUAN

Then be ready to go with me, and see that you bring all my arms, so that . . . (*Seeing Donna Elvire.*) Oh! vexatious encounter! You rascal! you did n't tell me she was here herself.

SGANARELLE

Sir, you did n't ask me.

DON JUAN

Has she lost her senses, not to have changed her dress, and to come to this place in her country clothes?

SCENE III

DONNA ELVIRE, DON JUAN, SGANARELLE

DONNA ELVIRE

Will you do me a favour, Don Juan, and be so good as to recognise me? May I at least hope that you will deign to look this way?

DON JUAN

Madam, I own I am surprised, and was not expecting you here.

DONNA ELVIRE

Yes, I see plainly that you were not expecting me; and you are in truth surprised, but quite otherwise than I hoped; your way of showing it makes me sure of what I would not believe before. I am amazed at my own simplicity and weakness of heart

in doubting a treason so strongly confirmed by appearances. I was simple enough, I admit, or rather fool enough, to try to deceive myself, and give the lie to my eyes and judgment. I sought for reasons to excuse to my own heart the abatement of affection which it found in you; and I invented a hundred legitimate causes for your hasty departure, on purpose to clear you of the crime which my reason told me you were guilty of. My just suspicions argued daily with me in vain; I was deaf to all that would make you guilty in my eyes, and I listened with delight to a thousand foolish fancies which whispered to my heart that you were innocent. But now your reception leaves me no room for doubt, and the glance with which you met me tells far more than I could wish to know. Yet I should like to hear from your own lips the reasons for your departure. Don Juan, speak, I pray you, and let us see with what countenance you can justify yourself.

DON JUAN

Madam, Sganarelle there knows why I came away.

SGANARELLE, *aside to Don Juan*

I, sir! I know nothing about it, if you please.

DONNA ELVIRE

Well, Sganarelle, speak. It makes no difference from whose lips I hear his reasons.

DON JUAN, *beckoning Sganarelle to approach*

Come now, speak to the lady.

SGANARELLE, *aside to Don Juan*

What would you have me say?

DONNA ELVIRE

Come here, since that is his will, and tell me the causes of so sudden a departure.

DON JUAN

Will you not answer?

SGANARELLE, *aside to Don Juan*

I have nothing to answer. You are making sport of your servant.

DON JUAN

Will you answer, I say?

SGANARELLE

Madam . . .

DONNA ELVIRE

Well?

SGANARELLE, *turning to his master again*

Sir . . .

DON JUAN, *threatening him*

If . . .

SGANARELLE

Madam, famous conquerors, Alexander, and the other worlds, are the cause of our departure. That 's all I can say, sir.

DONNA ELVIRE

Don Juan, will you be so good as to throw some light on these fine mysteries?

DON JUAN

To tell you the truth, madam . . .

DONNA ELVIRE

Ah! How little skill you show in defending yourself, you, a courtier and a man who must be accustomed to such things. I really pity you, to see you in such confusion. Why do you not arm your forehead with a noble effrontery? Why don't you swear to me that you still cherish the same feelings toward me, that you love me still with an unequalled passion, and that nothing but death can ever rend you from me? Why don't you tell me that business of the utmost importance forced you to come away without letting me know, that you must against your will stay here for some time longer, and that I have only to return where I came from, in the assurance that you will follow me as soon as you possibly can; that you burn to be with me again, and that while away from me you suffer as a body must suffer which is separated from its soul! That is how you should defend yourself, instead of being tongue-tied as you are.

DON JUAN

Madam, I own to you that I have not the talent to deceive, and that my heart is sincere. I shall not tell you that I still have the same feelings toward you, and that I burn to be with you again, because, in a word, 't is certain that I came away only to avoid you; not for the reasons that you imagine, but from a purely conscientious motive, because I did not feel I could live with you any longer without sin. I have been seized with scruples, madam, and the eyes of

my soul have been opened to what I was doing. I reflected that to marry you I stole you from the cloister, that for me you broke vows which bound you elsewhere, and that Heaven is very jealous in these matters. Repentance took hold on me, and I dreaded the anger of Heaven. It seemed to me that our marriage was only adultery in disguise, that it would bring upon us some calamity from on high, and that, in a word, I ought to try to forget you, and make it possible for you to return to your former bonds. Madam, could you wish to oppose so pious a thought? Would you have me bring Heaven's anger down upon myself by keeping you? And . . .

DONNA ELVIRE

Oh! villain, at last I know you through and through; but, for my misfortune, I know you too late, when such knowledge can only drive me to despair; but be sure your crime shall not remain unpunished, and the very Heaven you mock at will yet avenge me for your perfidy.

DON JUAN

Heaven, Sganarelle!

SGANARELLE

Heaven, indeed! We don't care a fig for all that!

DON JUAN

Madam . . .

DONNA ELVIRE

Enough! I will hear no more, and I blame myself for having heard too much. 'T is baseness to

demand too clear exposure of our shame; and in such matters a noble heart must take its resolution at the first hint. Do not think I shall break out in reproaches and insults; no, no, mine is not an anger to be frittered away in empty words, it reserves all its ardour for its vengeance. I tell you again, Heaven will punish you, traitor, for the wrong you are doing me; and if Heaven has nothing you can fear, fear at least the anger of an injured woman.

SCENE IV

DON JUAN, SGANARELLE

SGANARELLE, *aside*

If he might only be seized with remorse.

DON JUAN, *after musing a moment*

Come along, and let us see to the execution of our amorous enterprise.

SGANARELLE, *alone*

Oh, what an abominable master am I forced to serve!

ACT II

Open country by the sea-shore

SCENE I

CHARLOTTE, PIERROT

CHARLOTTE

I' fakins, Pierrot, yau weer theer in the vara nick o' time!

PIERROT

'S bobs! They were within eams eace o' bein' drawnded, boath of 'um.

CHARLOTTE

What! It was the greit storm o' waind this morn, that o'erset 'um in the seea?

PIERROT

Aye, marry, Charlotte, I' se tell thee autright haw it fell aut; for, as the sayin' is, I spy'd 'um aut ferst, ferst I spy'd 'um aut. Soa in short, I was o' th' seea side, I an' fat Lucas, and we weer a-plaaying the roague together, wi' clods o' yearth, that we threw at wan another's heids, for yau vara weel known, fat Lucas loves to plaay the roague, and I sumtimes plaay the roague too. Soa as we weer a-plaaying the roague, sens wee must e'en plaay the

roague, I parceav'd, a greit distance off, sumthin', that sterr'd in the watter, and it cam bobbin' taw'rds us. I look'd aarnestly at it, an' belive au' of a sudden I saa that I saa nothin' moor. "Whew! Lucas," says I, "I think theer be two men a-swimmin' dawn theer." "Pooa," says he, "yaw eyn be not fellows, yaw eyn be dazzl'd." "By th' mess," says I, "my eyn be not dazzl'd; thoas be men." "Noa, noa," says he to me, "ye 're purblind." "I hou'd a wager," says I, "that I be n't purblind," says I, "an' that thoas be two men," says I, "that are swimmin' streight hither," says I. "By my trath," says he, "I hou'd a wager they be not." "Weell, cum on," says I, "will yau hou'd ten-pence on 't?" "Marry will I," says he, "an' to show thee, theer's the muny dawn o' th' nail," says he. I was neather fool, nar fool-hardy, dawn comes I bou'dly upo' th' graund, with fowr silver pennys, and six pen'orth o' ha'pence, as freely, by 'r lady, as if I 'd drank a mug o' wine; for I 'm vara ventersome, an' go on helter-skelter. I knew what I dud, hawsomever, for au' my boudness, yau doant fool me! Soa we had but e'en just leay'd the wager, but we saa the two men vara pleanly, who made signs to us to cum and fetch 'um. Soa then ferst I snatches up the steäks. "Cum, Lucas," says I, "yau seen pleanly that they cawn us; let us goa off hand and seave 'um." "Noa," says he, "they made me loase." Then had we such a to-doo, that at last, to meak short on 't, I preich'd soa much to him, that we gat into a booat, an' then I mead soa much wark, that I gat 'um aut o' watter, an' then I carry'd 'um hoame to th' fire, an' then they doff'd 'umsells stark neaked to dry

'umsells, and soa then theer comes two moor o' th' seame cumpany, who weer seav'd boath togither quite alone, an' soa then comes Mathurine, and one of 'um had a sheep's eye taw'rds her. Just e'en soa, Charlotte, au' this happen'd.

CHARLOTTE

Dad n't yau say, Pierrot, that one of 'um was a deal handsomer than t' others?

PIERROT

Ay, he 's the master. He mun be some greit, greit, greit mon to be seur, for he 'as gould on his cloas au' over, from top to bottom, an' his sarvants are gentle fokes 'umsells, an' for au' his bein' a greit mon, i' fakes he had bin drawn'd, if I 'd not bin theer.

CHARLOTTE

E'en look a' that!

PIERROT

Oh, by 'r lakin, if 't had not been for us, he 'd a gan to 's laast reck'nin'.

CHARLOTTE

Is he still at your hause stark neaked, Pierrot?

PIERROT

Noa, noa, they au' put on their cloas agean befoor us. Marcy o' me, I ne'er saw any o' these folks dress 'umsells befoor. What a parcel o' fiddle-faddle things these courtiers wear! I shou'd loose mysel in 'um, for my part, and I was ameazed to see 'em. Marry, Charlotte, they han heare which does n't stick

to their heads, an' they putt it on laast like a heuge cap of unspun flax. They han sarks wi' sleeves that thau and I might get into, just as we be. Instead o' breeches they han an aapron as large as fro' this to Easter. Instead o' doublets, they han little tiny waistcoats that doa nat reach to their brisket-bane; and instead o' neckbands, a greit neck-hankerchi' o' leace-wark, wi' four large tufts o' linnen hangin' dawn o' their breasts. They han bands abaut their wrists too, and greit funnels o' leace abaut their legs, and amung aw this so mony ribbons, so mony ribbons, that it 's bornin' shame. There 's nought about 'um, e'en so much as their shoon, but what is stuff'd wi' 'um fro' one end to t' other, an' they 're made after such a fashion I shou'd break my neck in 'um.

CHARLOTTE

I' fakins, Pierrot, I mun go see 'um a little.

PIERROT

Oh! Hark thee, Charlotte, stay a little ferst, I have something elz to say to thee.

CHARLOTTE

Weell, tell me, what is 't?

PIERROT

Dost see, Charlotte, I mon, as the sayin' is, break my mind to thee. I 'm i' love wi' ye, yau known it vara weell, an' we be by way of bein' marry'd togither, but 'sboddikins, I 'm nat pleas'd wi' ye.

CHARLOTTE

Haw? what is the matter then?

PIERROT

Th' matter is yau vexn my vara heart, in good deed.

CHARLOTTE

Haw soa?

PIERROT

Feath yau doa not love me.

CHARLOTTE

Hoh! hoh! Is that au'?

PIERROT

Ay, that's au', and enough too, o' my conscience.

CHARLOTTE

Lawd, Pierrot, yau awlas sayn the seam thing to me.

PIERROT

I awlas say the seam thing because it awlas is the seam thing; an' if it wern't awlas the seam thing, I would n't awlas say the seam thing.

CHARLOTTE

But what mun I doa? What wou'd yau ha?

PIERROT

Buddakins I 'd ha ye love me.

CHARLOTTE

Whya, doan't I love thee?

PIERROT

Noa, yau doan't love me, an' for au' that I doo

au' I con to meake ye. Noa offence, I buy ribbons for yau of au' the pedlars that cum about; I break my neck to climb birds-nests for ye, I meak th' oud fiddler play for yau when your borthday cums; and au' this is noa moor than if I run my heid agean the wall. It is neather feer, nor honest, d' ye see, not to love foulk that loven us.

CHARLOTTE

Whya, weell-a-day, I love thee tew.

PIERROT

Ay, i'fakes, yaw loven me heugely.

CHARLOTTE

Haw wou'd yaw ha' one doa?

PIERROT

I wou'd ha' ye doa as foulk doa, when foulk be in love to sum porpose.

CHARLOTTE

Whya, doan't I love thee to sum porpose?

PIERROT

Noa. When that 's the case it 's seen, and one dos a thausand little apish tricks to foulk when one loves 'um in good aarnest. Do but see fat Thomasine, haw hoo's in love like bewitch'd with young Robin; hoo 's awlas about him to pleague him, an' hoo ne'er lets him alone, hoo 's awlas a-plaaying him sum unlucky prank, or hits him a rap as hoo goas by him; an t' uther day as he was sittin' on a jointstool, hoo cums and whips it from under him, and dawn faws he at 's foo length, upo' th' graund. 'S flesh! Foulk

doan thus when they 're i' love : but thau ne'er saist a word to me, for thy part, thau 'rt awlas for au' the warld like a log o' wood ; an' I mu'd goa by thee twenty times, an' thau ne'er sturr to gi' me the least thump, or say the least thing to me. Zooks! It 's nat weell dun, after au', an' yau 're too cou'd for foulk.

CHARLOTTE

What wu 'n yau ha' me doa? It 's my yumar, an' I connot new-meak my sel.

PIERROT

Yumar me no yumar, when wan loves foulk, wan awlas gi's sum smaw inkling on 't.

CHARLOTTE

I' short, I love thee as weell as I con ; and if thau been't content wi' that, thau mun e'en love sumbody elz.

PIERROT

Why theer naw, did n't I say soa? I' fakes, if yau lov'd me, wou'd yau say that?

CHARLOTTE

Why dun yau pleague one so?

PIERROT

Ookers, what harm doo I doo ye? I no' but ask a little love o' ye.

CHARLOTTE

Weell, let wan aloan then, an' doan't teaz me soa, happen it may cum au' at wance, withaut thinking on 't.

PIERROT

Shak honds then, Charlotte.

CHARLOTTE

Weell, theer. (*Gives him her hand.*)

PIERROT

Promise me then, that yau 'll strive to love me moor.

CHARLOTTE

I 'll doo aw I con, but that mun cum of it sel. Pierrot, is that the gentlemon?

PIERROT

Yai, that 's him.

CHARLOTTE

Oh! Lack-a-day, haw fine a is, an' what pity 't had bin, if a 'd bin drawn'd!

PIERROT

I'se cum agean belive, I'se goa drink a mug to rease my spirits a little after my fatigue.

SCENE II

DON JUAN, SGANARELLE; CHARLOTTE, *at the back of the stage*

DON JUAN

Well, we have missed our mark, Sganarelle, and that unexpected squall overturned our plans as well as our boat; but, to tell you the truth, the country-wench I have just parted from makes up for this mischance, and I find in her such charms as blot out

from my mind all that vexation which the ill-success of our enterprise caused me. This heart must not escape me, and I have already given it such inclinations that it will not let me sigh too long.

SGANARELLE

I must say, sir, you amaze me. Here we 've just barely escaped from a deadly peril, and instead of thanking Heaven for the compassion it has deigned to show us, you go about to draw down its anger again by your usual freaks, and your love-affairs. . . . (*Don Juan looks at him threateningly.*) (*Aside.*) Peace, rascal that you are, you don't know what you are saying, and your master knows what he is about. Go to.

DON JUAN, *seeing Charlotte*

Ah ha! Where does this other peasant-girl come from, Sganarelle? Did you ever see anything prettier? Tell me, don't you think this one is well worth the other?

SGANARELLE

Certainly. (*Aside.*) Another new piece.

DON JUAN, *to Charlotte*

To what, my pretty one, do I owe so happy a meeting? In this rural scene, among these trees and rocks are there maidens to be found so fair as you?

CHARLOTTE

As you see, sir.

DON JUAN

Do you belong to this village?

CHARLOTTE

Yes, sir.

DON JUAN

And you live here?

CHARLOTTE

Yes, sir.

DON JUAN

And your name is?

CHARLOTTE

Charlotte, at your service.

DON JUAN

Oh, what a beauty! How piercing those eyes are!

CHARLOTTE

You make me quite ashamed, sir.

DON JUAN

Ah! don't be ashamed to hear the truth spoken of you. Sganarelle, what do you say? Is it possible to find anything more lovely? Turn round a little, please. Ah! what a pretty figure! Lift your head a bit, pray. Ah! what a dainty face! Open your eyes wide. Ah! how beautiful they are! Just let me see your teeth a little, won't you? Ah! how amorous they are, and how inviting are those lips! For my part, I am enraptured, and I never saw maiden so charming.

CHARLOTTE

Sir, you be pleased to say soa, and I doan't knaw whether you doan't banter me.

DON JUAN

I, banter you? Heaven forbid! I love you too much for that, and 't is from the very bottom of my heart I speak.

CHARLOTTE

I 'm vara much oblig'd to you, if it is soa.

DON JUAN

Not at all, you are not obliged to me for anything I say; 't is only to your beauty that you owe it.

CHARLOTTE

Sir, au' that 's too fine talk for me, and I 've not wit enough to answer you.

DON JUAN

Do but look at her hands, Sganarelle.

CHARLOTTE

Fie, sir! they 're as dirty as I doan't know what.

DON JUAN

Oh, how can you say so? They are the most beautiful hands in the world; pray let me kiss them.

CHARLOTTE

Sir, ' t is too much honour you do me; and if I 'd knawn it just now, I 'd not have failed to 've washed 'em wi' bran.

DON JUAN

Just tell me, fair Charlotte, you are not married, are you?

CHARLOTTE

Noa, sir, but I am to be vara soon, to Pierrot, our neighbour Simonette's son.

DON JUAN

What! such a beauty as you, to be the wife of a mere country lout! No, no, 't would be a profanation of so much loveliness; for you were not born to live in a village, and surely deserve a better fortune; Heaven knows it, and has brought me here on purpose to prevent this marriage, and do justice to your charms; for the truth is, fair Charlotte, I love you with all my heart, and if you 'll but say the word, I will carry you off from this wretched place, and set you in the position you deserve. This love is rather sudden, to be sure; but why not, when 't is the effect, Charlotte, of your great beauty; a man can love you as much in a quarter of an hour as any other in six months.

CHARLOTTE

In good troth, sir, I doan't know haw to behave when you talk. What you say pleases me, and I 'd like for au' the warld to believe you: but I 've awlas been tould, that we must ne'er believe the gentlemen, an' that you courtiers be wheedlers, who mind nothing but to make fools of young girls.

DON JUAN

I am not one of those people.

SGANARELLE, *aside*

No, not he!

CHARLOTTE

Look ye, sir, there 's noa pleasure in bein' made a fool of. I 'm a poor country-wench, but I value honour above everything; I 'd sooner choose to die than to lose my honour.

DON JUAN

Could I have a soul so wicked as to impose on such a one as you? Could I be so base as to dishonour you? No, no, I have too much conscience for that. I love you, Charlotte, in all honesty and honour; and, to prove I speak the truth, know that I have no other intention but to marry you. Would you have a greater proof? Here am I ready, when you will; and I call this man here to be witness of the promise I make you.

SGANARELLE

No, no, never fear. He 'll marry you as much as you like.

DON JUAN

Ah! Charlotte, I see plainly that you don't know me yet. You do me great wrong to judge me by others; and if there are deceivers in the world, people who seek only to impose on young girls, you must except me from this number, and not doubt the sincerity of my love; besides, your beauty is a full guarantee for you. When a woman is as handsome as you are she is safe from all such fears; believe me, you do not look like a person destined to

be imposed on; and for my part I protest I 'd stab myself to the heart a thousand times if I could harbour the least thought of betraying you.

CHARLOTTE

Marry, I doan't know whether you speak truth or noa; but you make one believe you.

DON JUAN

In believing me you will certainly do me but justice, and I repeat again the promise that I made you. Don't you accept it? and will you not consent to be my wife?

CHARLOTTE

Yea, if my aunt will let me.

DON JUAN

Then give me your hand upon it, Charlotte, since for your own part you consent.

CHARLOTTE

But at least, sir, pray doan't deceive me. 'T would be a sin, and you see how vara honestly I gie my word.

DON JUAN

What! You seem to doubt my sincerity still! Would you have me swear the most horrible oaths? May Heaven . . .

CHARLOTTE

Gracious me! doan't swear; I 'll believe you.

DON JUAN

Then give me one little kiss as a pledge of your word.

CHARLOTTE

Oh ! sir, stay till we be married, I pray you. After that, I 'll kiss you as much as you pleäse.

DON JUAN

Well, fair Charlotte, your will is mine ; only give me your hand, and let a thousand kisses express to it the ecstasy I feel.

SCENE III

DON JUAN, SGANARELLE, PIERROT, CHARLOTTE

PIERROT, *coming between them, and pushing Don Juan away*

Softly, sir ; hou'd, an yau pleäse. Yau 're too hot, yau mayn get a purisy.

DON JUAN, *pushing Pierrot back roughly*

Where does this impudent fellow come from ?

PIERROT, *coming between Don Juan and Charlotte again*

I say yau mon hou'd, and yau monnat kiss our wives that are to be.

DON JUAN, *again pushing Pierrot back*

Oh ! what a to-do !

PIERROT

S' blews, yau monnat push foulk soa.

CHARLOTTE, *taking Pierrot by the arm*

Let him aloan, Pierrot.

PIERROT

Haw, let him aloan? I 'll nat let him aloan, nat I.

DON JUAN

Oh ho!

PIERROT

'S flesh! Because yau 're a gentilmon, yau cum heer to kiss our wives under aur noazes. Goa an' kiss yaur awn.

DON JUAN

So?

PIERROT

Ay, soa! (*Don Juan gives him a fisticuff.*) Ookers, doan' t straike me. (*Another.*) Ats fish! (*Another.*) S' heart! (*Another.*) S'bud an' guts! it is n't feer to beat foulk; is this the racompence yau make me for saving yau from being drawn'd?

CHARLOTTE

Doan't be angry, Pierrot.

PIERROT

I will be angry; an' thau 'rt a pitiful hussey, to let him wheedle thee.

CHARLOTTE

Oh! Pierrot, it is n't as yau thinkn. This gentilmon will marry me, an' yau should n't be in a passion.

PIERROT

Haw? I' trath thau 'rt promis'd to me.

CHARLOTTE

That makes no matter, Pierrot. If yau lovn me, shou'd ye nat be glad that I 'm made a Madam?

PIERROT

Wauns, noa! I 'se as soon see thee hang 'd, as see thee gi'n to anuther.

CHARLOTTE

Goa, goa, Pierrot, doan't fret thyself. If I 'm a Madam, I 'se gi' thee sumthing, an thau shalt serve aur hause wi' butter an' cheese.

PIERROT

S'blews! I 'se ne 'er sarve ye wi' anything, an yau wou'd pay me twice as much. What, doa yau mind what he says then? Mess! an' I 'd known that just naw, I 'se ha' ta'en greit ceare haw I had ta 'en him aut o' th' watter, and I 'd ha' gi'n him a good rap o' th' heid wi' my oar.

DON JUAN, *coming up to Pierrot, to strike him*

What 's that you say?

PIERROT, *getting behind Charlotte*

Wauns! I 'se afraid o' noa mon.

DON JUAN, *following Pierrot*

Just let me get hold of you.

PIERROT, *running round behind Charlotte again*

I doan't care what yau doa.

DON JUAN, *running after Pierrot*

We 'll see about that.

PIERROT, *hiding behind Charlotte once more*

I 'a seen mony a mon as good as yau.

DON JUAN

Wow!

SGANARELLE

Oh! Sir, let the poor wretch alone. 'T is a sin to beat him. (*Getting between Pierrot and Don Juan, and speaking to Pierrot.*) Listen, my good fellow, get away with you, and don't talk to him.

PIERROT, *passing in front of Sganarelle and looking Don Juan proudly in the face*

I will talk to him, I will.

DON JUAN, *lifting his hand to strike Pierrot*

Ah! I 'll teach you. (*Pierrot ducks his head and Sganarelle gets the blow.*)

SGANARELLE, *looking askance at Pierrot*

Plague take the scamp!

DON JUAN, *to Sganarelle*

There, you are well paid for your charity.

PIERROT

I' George! I'se goa tell her aunt aw theas fine dooin's.

SCENE IV

DON JUAN, CHARLOTTE, SGANARELLE

DON JUAN, *to Charlotte*

In truth, I shall be the happiest of men, and I would not exchange my good fortune for anything in the world. What delights when once you are my wife, and what . . .

SCENE V

DON JUAN, MATHURINE, CHARLOTTE, SGANARELLE

SGANARELLE, *seeing Mathurine*

Ah ha!

MATHURINE, *to Don Juan*

Sir, what are yau dooin' theer wi' Charlotte? Be yau coorting her too?

DON JUAN, *aside to Mathurine*

No. Quite the contrary, 't is she that was telling me she 'd a mind to be my wife, and I answered that I was promised to you.

CHARLOTTE, *to Don Juan*

Whatever is 't Mathurine can want wi' ye?

DON JUAN, *aside to Charlotte*

She 's jealous at seeing me talk with you, and would like to have me marry her. But I tell her 't is you that I want.

MATHURINE

What! Charlotte . . .

DON JUAN, *aside to Mathurine*

All you can say will be useless; she has got that bee in her bonnet.

CHARLOTTE

How naow! Mathurine . . .

DON JUAN, *aside to Charlotte*

'T is no use to talk to her; you will never get that whim out of her head.

MATHURINE

Wou'd yau . . .

DON JUAN, *aside to Mathurine*

There is no way of making her listen to reason.

CHARLOTTE

I 'd like . . .

DON JUAN, *aside to Charlotte*

She 's as obstinate as a whole pack of devils.

MATHURINE

Faith and trath . . .

DON JUAN, *aside to Mathurine*

Don't talk to her, she 's crazy.

CHARLOTTE

I think . . .

DON JUAN, *aside to Charlotte*

Let her alone, she 's out of her senses.

MATHURINE

Noa, noa, I must talk to her.

CHARLOTTE

I must hear why she . . .

MATHURINE

What! . . .

DON JUAN, *aside to Mathurine*

I wager she 'll tell you I promised to marry her.

CHARLOTTE

I . . .

DON JUAN, *aside to Charlotte*

Let us wager she 'll maintain that I gave her my word to make her my wife.

MATHURINE

Hark 'ee, Charlotte, 't is nat right to meddle with other foulks' bargains.

CHARLOTTE

It is n't honest, Mathurine, to be jealous because the gentilmon talks to me.

MATHURINE

The gentilmon saw me ferst.

CHARLOTTE

If he saw yau ferst, he saw me second, and has promis'd to marry me.

DON JUAN, *aside to Mathurine*

Well! What did I tell you?

MATHURINE, *to Charlotte*

Yer humble sarvant; it was me, and not yau he promis'd to marry.

DON JUAN, *aside to Charlotte*

Did n't I guess right?

CHARLOTTE

Put yaur shams upon others, pray, not upon me, 't was me, I tell you.

MATHURINE

Yau joke with foulk; it was me, once more.

CHARLOTTE

Here 's the person can tell yau whether I 'm in the right.

MATHURINE

Here 's the person can gie me the lie, if I doan't say true.

CHARLOTTE

Did yau really promise to marry her, sir?

DON JUAN, *aside to Charlotte*

You are making a jest of me.

MATHURINE

Is 't true, sir, that yau 've promised to be her husband?

DON JUAN, *aside to Mathurine*

Can you have such a thought?

CHARLOTTE

You see she affirms it.

DON JUAN, *aside to Charlotte*

Let her affirm it.

MATHURINE

Yau are witness haw she avers it.

DON JUAN, *aside to Mathurine*

Let her aver it.

CHARLOTTE

No, no, we must know the truth.

MATHURINE

The matter mun be decided.

CHARLOTTE

Yes, Mathurine, I 'd have the gentilmon to shew yau haw green yau are.

MATHURINE

Yes, Charlotte, I 'd have the gentilmon gie yau a good snub.

CHARLOTTE

Sir, please to decide the quarrel.

MATHURINE

Ay, settle our quarrel, sir.

CHARLOTTE, *to Mathurine*

Yau 'll see.

MATHURINE, *to Charlotte*

Yau 'll see, yauself.

CHARLOTTE, *to Don Juan*

Say.

MATHURINE, *to Don Juan*

Speak.

DON JUAN, *embarrassed, speaking to them both*

What would you have me say? You both alike

maintain that I promised to marry you. Does not each of you know how things stand, without need of my speaking more clearly? Why should you force me to repeat myself? Has not the one to whom I really gave the promise a sufficient reason within herself to scorn all the other can say? And why should she give herself any uneasiness if I only fulfil my promise? No amount of talking will help in the least. We must do and not say; and actions speak louder than words. And so, that is the only way I will reconcile you; 't will be clear, when I marry, which of you has my heart. (*Aside to Mathurine.*) Let her think what she likes. (*Aside to Charlotte.*) Let her flatter herself in her own imagination. (*Aside to Mathurine.*) I adore you. (*Aside to Charlotte.*) I am wholly yours. (*Aside to Mathurine.*) All faces are ugly beside yours. (*Aside to Charlotte.*) Once a man has seen you there is no enduring others. (*Aloud.*) I have a little order to give, I 'll be back in a quarter of an hour.

SCENE VI

CHARLOTTE, MATHURINE, SGANARELLE

CHARLOTTE, *to Mathurine*

I 'm the one he loves, anyhow.

MATHURINE, *to Charlotte*

I 'm the one he 'll marry.

SGANARELLE, *interrupting them*

Ah! poor girls, I pity your innocence, and I cannot bear to see you run to your ruin. Listen to me,

both of you: don't take any stock in the stories he tells you, but stay in your village.

SCENE VII

DON JUAN, CHARLOTTE, MATHURINE, SGANARELLE

DON JUAN, *at the back of the stage, aside*

I wonder why Sganarelle does n't follow me.

SGANARELLE

My master is an impostor; his only intention is to deceive you, as he has deceived many others; he marries anybody and everybody, and . . . (*Seeing Don Juan.*) Now all that is false, and whoever may say it, you must tell him he lies. My master does not marry anybody and everybody, he is not an impostor, he does not intend to deceive you, and he has not deceived others. Ah! here he is, now; if you don't believe it, ask him.

DON JUAN, *watching Sganarelle, and suspecting that he has been tattling*

Yes!

SGANARELLE

Sir, since the world is full of slanderers, I am trying to be beforehand with them; and I was telling these girls that if anybody were to speak ill of you, they must be sure not to believe him, and not fail to tell him he lied.

DON JUAN

Sganarelle!

SGANARELLE, *to Charlotte and Mathurine*

Yes, my master is a man of honour; I warrant him for such.

DON JUAN

Ahem!

SGANARELLE

They are impudent rascals.

SCENE VIII

DON JUAN, LA RAMEE, CHARLOTTE, MATHURINE, SGANARELLE

LA RAMEE, *aside to Don Juan*

Sir, I have come to warn you that 't is not for your good health to be here.

DON JUAN

What?

LA RAMEE

Twelve mounted men are hunting for you, and they will be here in a moment; I don't know how they can have followed you; but I learned the news from a peasant whom they questioned, and to whom they described you. The case is urgent, and the sooner you can get away from here the better.

SCENE IX

DON JUAN, CHARLOTTE, MATHURINE, SGANARELLE

DON JUAN, *to Charlotte and Mathurine*

An urgent matter forces me to leave here; but I

beg you to remember the promise I have given you, and depend upon it you shall hear from me before to-morrow evening.

SCENE X

DON JUAN, SGANARELLE

DON JUAN

Since we are not equally matched, I must use strategy, and elude by adroitness the misfortune that pursues me. I will have Sganarelle put on my clothes, and I . . .

SGANARELLE

Sir, you're joking. Expose me to be killed in your clothes, and . . .

DON JUAN

Come, be quick! I 'm doing you too much honour; thrice happy the valet who can have the glory of dying for his master.

SGANARELLE

Many thanks, for such an honour! (*Alone.*) O Heaven, since there 's death in the case, grant me not to be taken for another!

ACT III

A wood

SCENE I

DON JUAN, *dressed as a country gentleman;* SGANARELLE, *in a doctor's gown.*

SGANARELLE

On my word, sir, you must own that I was in the right, and that we are both of us wonderfully well disguised. Your first plan did not fit the occasion at all, and this conceals us far better than what you wished to do.

DON JUAN

'T is true you 're well got up; where in the world did you unearth those ridiculous togs?

SGANARELLE

Oh, 't is an old doctor's gown that had been pawned where I got it, and I had to pay good money for it too. But do you know, sir, that this gown already makes me respected? The people I meet doff their hats to me, and they come to consult me as if I were a learned man.

DON JUAN

What?

SGANARELLE

Five or six country-folk, seeing me go by, came to ask my opinion about their diseases.

DON JUAN

You told them that you knew nothing of the matter.

SGANARELLE

I? Far from it. I chose rather to sustain the honour of my gown; I talked learnedly upon the malady, and gave prescriptions to each of them.

DON JUAN

And what remedies did you prescribe?

SGANARELLE

On my word, sir, I e'en grabbed where I could get hold; I made my prescriptions at random; and 't would be a droll thing if the patients got well, and came to thank me for it.

DON JUAN

And why not? Why should n't you have the same privileges as all other doctors? They play no greater part than you in curing their patients, and all their art is mere pretence. They do nothing except to take the credit when things go well; and you may profit, as they do, by the luck of the patient, and see attributed to your remedies whatever good may come from the favours of chance and the forces of nature.

SGANARELLE

What, sir, are you an infidel in medicine too?

DON JUAN

'T is one of the great errors of mankind.

SGANARELLE

What! You don't believe in senna, or in cassia, or in emetic wine?

DON JUAN

And why should I believe in them?

SGANARELLE

You have a most unbelieving soul. For all that, you know the emetic wine has been making a great noise in the world of late. Its miracles have converted the most incredulous minds, and less than three weeks ago I saw myself, I who am now speaking to you, a marvellous proof of its power.

DON JUAN

Which was?

SGANARELLE

There was a man who had been for six days at death's door, no one knew what more to prescribe for him, and all their remedies had no effect; finally they thought of giving him the emetic.

DON JUAN

And so he got well?

SGANARELLE

No, he died.

DON JUAN

An admirable result!

SGANARELLE

Of course! For six whole days he had not been able to die, and that made him die straightaway. Could you ask for anything more effective?

DON JUAN

Right you are.

SGANARELLE

But enough of medicine, which you don't believe in; let us speak of other things; for this gown hath given me wit, and I feel in fit humour to argue against you. Remember you allow me arguments, and only forbid remonstrances.

DON JUAN

Well?

SGANARELLE

I should like to know a little of what you really think. Is it possible you don't believe in Heaven at all?

DON JUAN

Enough of that.

SGANARELLE

That means no. And in Hell?

DON JUAN

Pooh!

SGANARELLE

Same answer. And in the devil, if you please?

DON JUAN

Oh yes.

SGANARELLE

Just as little. Don't you believe in the future life?

DON JUAN

Ha! ha! ha!

SGANARELLE

Here's a man I shall have much pains to convert. Just tell me,—how about the Bogey? What do you think of him? Eh?

DON JUAN

Plague take the ass!

SGANARELLE

Now, that is more than I can stand! For there is nothing truer than the Bogey, I'd be hung for it. But at least a man must believe in something here below. Now what *do* you believe in?

DON JUAN

What I believe in?

SGANARELLE

Yes.

DON JUAN

I believe that two and two make four, Sganarelle, and that twice four is eight.

SGANARELLE

What a grand faith, and what noble articles of

belief! So your religion, as far as I see, is just arithmetic? I must own that strange follies do come into the heads of men, and that those who have studied are oftenest the less wise for it. For my part, sir, I have not studied like you, God be thanked, and nobody can boast of ever having taught me anything; but with my bit of common-sense, my own grain of judgment, I see things better than all the books; and I understand very well that this world which we behold is not a mushroom that sprang up of itself in a night. I should like to ask you who made these trees, these rocks, this earth, and that sky up there; and whether it all built itself. Now you there, for instance—there you are! Did you make yourself, all alone? Didn't your father have to get your mother with child that you might come into the world? Can you behold all the contrivances which this machine, man, is made up of, and not marvel at the way 't is all fitted together? These sinews, these bones, these veins, these arteries, these lungs, these . . . this heart, this liver, and all the other ingredients which there are there, and which . . . Oh, Lord! interrupt me, for Heaven's sake, won't you! I can't argue unless I am interrupted. You just shut up on purpose, and let me go on for sheer malice.

DON JUAN

I am waiting for your argument to be finished.

SGANARELLE

My argument is that there is something in man so marvellous, that, whatever you may say, all the learned men in the world can't explain it. Is 't not

a marvel that I am here, and that I have something in my head that thinks a hundred different thoughts in a moment, and does with my body whatever it will? I have a mind to clap my hands, to lift my arm, to look up, to bend my head, to move my feet, to walk to the right, to the left, forward, back, to turn around . . . (*In turning he trips and falls.*)

DON JUAN

Good! Now your argument 's fallen to the ground and got its nose broken.

SGANARELLE

S'death! I am a very fool to waste time arguing with you! Believe what you please; what is it to me that you should be damned?

DON JUAN

But in the course of the argument I think we have lost our way. Just call that man I see there and ask him the road.

SGANARELLE

Hallo! Ho! Man there! Ahoy! My good fellow! Hallo! Friend, a word with you, if you please.

SCENE II

DON JUAN, SGANARELLE, A POOR MAN

SGANARELLE

Just tell us the way to town, will you.

THE POOR MAN

You have only to follow this road, sirs, and turn to

the right when you come to the end of the wood; but I warn you that you must be on your guard, for of late there have been robbers about here.

DON JUAN

I am much obliged to you, friend, and thank you with all my heart.

THE POOR MAN

If you would help me, sir, with some alms?

DON JUAN

Ah ha! your information is given from selfish motives, I see.

THE POOR MAN

I am a poor man, sir, and have been living alone in this wood these ten years; and I shall not fail to pray Heaven to give you all sorts of benefits.

DON JUAN

Oh! pray Heaven to give you a coat, and don't trouble yourself about other people's affairs.

SGANARELLE

My good fellow, you don't know this gentleman; he believes in nothing but two and two make four, and twice four is eight.

DON JUAN

What do you do among these trees?

THE POOR MAN

I pray to Heaven all day long for the prosperity of the honest folk who give me alms.

DON JUAN

Then surely you must be pretty well off.

THE POOR MAN

Alas, sir, I am in the greatest possible need.

DON JUAN

You are jesting; a man who prays to Heaven all day long cannot fail to be well off.

THE POOR MAN

I assure you, sir, most of the time I have n't a bit of bread to put between my teeth.

DON JUAN

That is strange; you seem to be ill recompensed for your trouble. Ah! I will give you a gold piece presently, if you will but swear.

THE POOR MAN

Oh! sir, would you have me commit such a sin?

DON JUAN

You have only to consider whether you want a gold piece or not; here 's one I will give you, if you swear. Come. Swear now.

THE POOR MAN

Sir . . .

DON JUAN

Unless you do, you sha'n't have it.

SGANARELLE

Come, come, swear a bit; there 's no harm in it.

DON JUAN

Here, take it, 't is yours, I say ; only swear, will you !

THE POOR MAN

No, sir, I will starve first.

DON JUAN

Well, there, I give it to you for the love of humanity. (*Looking down through the woods.*) But what is this?—a man set upon by three others? The match is too unequal, I cannot suffer such baseness. (*He draws his sword and runs to the scene of combat.*)

SCENE III

SGANARELLE, *alone*

My master is a very madman to go and meet a danger which is not seeking him. But, on my word, his help has served the turn, and the two have put the three to flight.

SCENE IV

DON JUAN, DON CARLOS; SGANARELLE, *at the back of the stage*

DON CARLOS, *sword in hand*

'T is plain, from the flight of these robbers, how much I owe to your help; permit me, sir, to thank you for so noble an act, and to . . .

DON JUAN, *returning, sword in hand.*

Sir, I did no more than you would have done in my place. One's own honour is at stake in such

adventures; and the action of those scoundrels was so base that anyone who failed to oppose it would have been a sharer in it. But by what chance did you fall into their hands?

DON CARLOS

By ill-luck I had lost my way and been separated from my brother and the rest of our company, and as I was trying to find them, I met with these robbers, who first killed my horse, and then, but for your valour, would have done the same by me.

DON JUAN

Were you intending to go toward the town?

DON CARLOS

Yes, but not to enter it. My brother and I find ourselves obliged to scour the country on account of one of these unfortunate affairs which compel gentlemen to sacrifice themselves, and their families as well, to the hard demands of their honour, since in any case the most favourable outcome is always full of evil, and you must either quit your life or be forced to quit the kingdom; 't is in this that I find the estate of a gentleman unfortunate, that he cannot depend on any degree of prudence and honour in his own conduct, but is bound by the laws of honour to other men's lawlessness; and that his life, his peace, and his property depend on the caprice of any hare-brained fellow who may take it into his head to do him one of those injuries for which a gentleman must die.

DON JUAN

We have this advantage, that we can make those

who choose wantonly to do us an injury run the same risks and suffer the same discomfort. But would it be too inquisitive if I should ask you what this affair of honour may be?

DON CARLOS

The thing is past making a secret of; and when a wrong has once been made public, our honour lies not in seeking to hide the shame, but in blazoning forth our vengeance, and even in publishing our intent to compass it. And so, sir, I shall not hesitate to tell you that the offence we are seeking to avenge is the seduction of a sister who was carried off from her convent, and that the author of this offence is one Don Juan Tenorio, son of Don Louis Tenorio. We have been looking for him these several days; and we followed him this morning on the information of a servant who told us that he had set out on horseback, in company with four or five men, and that he had come this way; but all our pains have been to no purpose, and we have failed to discover what 's become of him.

DON JUAN

Do you know this Don Juan of whom we are speaking?

DON CARLOS

No, I do not. I never saw him, and have only heard him described by my brother. But rumour says no great good of him, and he is a man whose life . . .

DON JUAN

Stay, sir, if you please. He is somewhat of a

friend of mine, and 't would be a kind of baseness in me to hear him ill spoken of.

DON CARLOS

For your sake, sir, I will say nothing of him; 't is surely the least I can do for you, after you have saved my life, to forbear speaking before you of a person who is your acquaintance, when I can say nothing but evil of him; but be you ever so much his friend, I dare to hope that you will not approve this action of his, or think it strange that we should seek vengeance for it.

DON JUAN

On the contrary, I shall be glad to serve you in the matter, and spare you useless trouble. I am a friend of Don Juan, that I cannot help; but 't is not in reason that he should offend gentlemen with impunity, and I promise you he shall give you satisfaction.

DON CARLOS

But what satisfaction can be given for such wrongs?

DON JUAN

All that your honour can desire; and without your being at pains to seek further for him, I promise you that he shall meet you where and when you will.

DON CARLOS

This hope, sir, is most welcome to outraged hearts; but after what I owe to you, 't would grieve me too deeply to find you engaged in his quarrel.

DON JUAN

I am so closely bound to Don Juan that he cannot

fight without my fighting too; however, I answer for him as for myself, and you have only to say when you will have him appear and give you satisfaction.

DON CARLOS

How cruel is my fate—that I should owe my life to you, and Don Juan be your friend!

SCENE V

DON ALONZO AND THREE ATTENDANTS, DON CARLOS, DON JUAN, SGANARELLE

DON ALONZO, *speaking to his attendants, without seeing Don Carlos and Don Juan*

Let my horses drink there, and then lead them after us; I will walk on a little. (*Seeing the other two.*) But what is this? Brother, do I find you with our mortal enemy?

DON CARLOS

Our mortal enemy?

DON JUAN, *stepping back three paces and proudly placing his hand on the hilt of his sword*

Yes, I am myself Don Juan, and your advantage in numbers shall not make me try to disown my name.

DON ALONZO, *drawing his sword*

Ah! traitor, you must die; and . . .
(*Sganarelle runs to hide.*)

DON CARLOS

Stop, brother! I owe him my life; and but for the

help of his arm I should have been killed by some robbers I met with.

DON ALONZO

And will you let this consideration stand in the way of our vengeance? All the services an enemy's hand can do have no power to bind us; and if we compare the obligation with the injury, your gratitude, brother, becomes ridiculous; for since honour is infinitely more precious than life, 't is very nothing we owe, when we owe life to one who has robbed us of honour.

DON CARLOS

Brother, I know the distance a gentleman must always set between these two, and my gratitude for the service done me does not blot out my resentment for the wrong; but let me now return to him what he lent, let me pay back immediately, by deferring our vengeance, the life I owe him, and leave him free to enjoy for some few days the fruit of his good deed.

DON ALONZO

No, no, 't is hazarding our vengeance to put it off, and the chance of taking it may never return. Heaven offers it to us now, 't is for us to profit by the occasion. When honour is mortally wounded, one must not think of moderation; and if you like not to lend your arm to this deed, you have but to withdraw, and leave me the glory of the sacrifice.

DON CARLOS

I beg you, brother . . .

DON ALONZO

All this talk is superfluous ; he must die.

DON CARLOS

Stop, brother, I say again. I will not permit any attack on his life, and I swear to Heaven that I will defend him here against anyone whatsoever, and will build him a rampart of this life that he saved ; and, if you thrust at him, it must be through me.

DON ALONZO

What! You take our enemy's side against me! And, so far from being seized at sight of him with the same passion as I, you show for him feelings of tenderness!

DON CARLOS

Brother, let us use moderation in a just deed ; and let us not avenge our honour with such violence as you show. Let us have courage but be masters of it, let our valour be free from savagery, and act only under the calm guidance of our reason, not under the impulse of a blind passion. I will not remain in debt to my enemy ; I am under obligation to him, and my first thought must be to pay what I owe. Our revenge will be none the less signal for being deferred ; on the contrary, it will gain thereby ; and this opportunity we had of taking it will make it appear yet more just in the eyes of all.

DON ALONZO

O strange weakness, and dreadful blindness, to hazard thus the interests of one's honour for the absurd idea of an imaginary obligation!

DON CARLOS

No, brother, have no fear. If I am in the wrong, I will surely find a way to make amends, and I take upon myself the whole care of our honour; I know to what it binds us; and this one day's delay, which my gratitude asks of it, will but increase my eagerness to satisfy it. Don Juan, you see that I am careful to return the service you did me; by this you may judge of the rest, and believe that I shall be just as eager to pay you all I owe, and no less strict in requiting the wrong than the benefit. I will not force you now to state your intentions. I leave you free to decide at leisure on the course you will pursue. You know well enough how great a wrong you have done us, and I leave you to judge for yourself what reparation it calls for. There are peaceable means to satisfy us, there are violent and bloody ones; but, whichever you choose, you have passed your word to me that Don Juan shall give me satisfaction. See that he does so, I beg you, and do not forget that anywhere but here, I have no obligations save to my honour.

DON JUAN

I have claimed nothing from you, and will keep the promise I have given.

DON CARLOS

Come, brother; a moment's forbearance will do no wrong to the strict demands of our duty.

SCENE VI

DON JUAN, SGANARELLE

DON JUAN

Hallo! Ho! Sganarelle ?

SGANARELLE, *coming out from where he was hiding*

What did you say, sir ?

DON JUAN

What! You rascal, do you run away when I am attacked ?

SGANARELLE

Pardon me, sir, I was just near by. I think this gown is purgative, and that wearing it is as good as a dose of physic.

DON JUAN

Plague take your insolence! At least hide your cowardice under a more seemly veil. Do you know whose life it was I saved ?

SGANARELLE

I? No.

DON JUAN

It was a brother of Elvire.

SGANARELLE

A . . .

DON JUAN

A man of honour too, and behaved very well. I am sorry we must be enemies.

SGANARELLE

'T would be easy for you to make everything right.

DON JUAN

Yes, but my passion for Donna Elvire is worn out, and to be bound to her does not suit my humour. In love I love freedom, you know, and cannot bring myself to immure my heart within four walls. I 've told you twenty times I have a natural inclination to yield to whatever attracts me. My heart belongs to all the fair sex, and 't is for them to take it, each in turn, and keep it as long as they can. But what is the stately edifice I see among these trees?

SGANARELLE

You do not know?

DON JUAN

No, truly.

SGANARELLE

Good! 'T is the tomb which the Commandant was having built when you killed him.

DON JUAN

Ah! you 're right. I did not know it was hereabouts. Everyone has told me marvellous things about this monument, and the statue of the Commandant; I have a mind to go and see it.

SGANARELLE

Sir, do not go there.

DON JUAN

Why?

SGANARELLE

'T is not polite to go and call on a man you have killed.

DON JUAN

On the contrary, 't is a civility I shall be glad to show him, and he must receive it with a good grace, if he is a gentleman. Come, let us go in.

(*The tomb opens, discovering a superb mausoleum and the statue of the Commandant.*)

SGANARELLE

Ah! how beautiful it is! what beautiful statues! what beautiful marble! what beautiful columns! Ah! how beautiful it is! What do you say to it, sir?

DON JUAN

That the ambition of a dead man can no farther go; what most I find to marvel at, is that a man who in his life-time was content with a simple enough dwelling, should want to have such a magnificent one when he has no more occasion for it.

SGANARELLE

Here is the statue of the Commandant.

DON JUAN

Zounds! he looks well, in his costume as a Roman emperor.

SGANARELLE

On my word, sir, 't is beautifully done. 'T would seem as though he were alive, and were going to speak. He casts such looks upon us as would terrify me if I were alone, and I think he is not pleased to see us.

DON JUAN

If so, he is in the wrong; 't would be an unhandsome reception of the honour that I do him. Ask him if he will come and have supper with me.

SGANARELLE

That is something he has no need of, I fancy.

DON JUAN

Ask him, I tell you.

SGANARELLE

Are you jesting? 'T would be madness to go and speak to a statue.

DON JUAN

Do as I tell you!

SGANARELLE

What a strange whim! My Lord Commandant . . . (*Aside.*) I laugh at my own foolishness; but 't is my master makes me do it. (*Aloud.*) My Lord Commandant, my master Don Juan asks if you will do him the honour to come and have supper with him. (*The statue nods its head.*) Ah!

DON JUAN

What is it? What ails you? Speak, will you!

SGANARELLE, *nodding just as the statue did*

The statue . . .

DON JUAN

Well, what do you mean, villain?

SGANARELLE

I tell you, the statue . . .

DON JUAN

Well! The statue? I'll knock your brains out if you don't speak.

SGANARELLE

The statue made a sign to me.

DON JUAN

Plague take the rascal!

SGANARELLE

It made a sign to me, I tell you; 't is simple truth. Go and speak to it yourself, and see. Perhaps . . .

DON JUAN

Come, you rogue, come. I will make you set your finger on your own cowardice. Pay attention. Will my Lord the Commandant come and take supper with me?

(*The statue nods its head again.*)

SGANARELLE

I would n't have missed it for ten gold pieces. Well, now, sir?

DON JUAN

Come, let us leave here.

SGANARELLE, *alone*

There are your freethinkers, who won't believe in anything!

ACT IV

Don Juan's lodgings

SCENE I

DON JUAN, SGANARELLE, RAGOTIN

DON JUAN, *to Sganarelle*

Be that as it may, let us drop it; 't is a mere trifle, and we may have been deceived by a false light, or some dizziness may have suddenly confused our vision.

SGANARELLE

Ah! Sir, do not try to prove false what we saw with these very eyes. Nothing can be more real than that nod of the head; and I have no doubt that Heaven, scandalised by your way of life, wrought this miracle to convince you, and to reclaim you from . . .

DON JUAN

Listen. If you annoy me any more with your stupid moralisings, if you say the least word more on the subject, I will call some one to fetch a bull's-muscle bastinado, and I 'll have you held by three or four men, and beat you within an inch of your life. Do you understand me?

SGANARELLE

Oh yes, sir, very well indeed, sir, most excellently well, sir. You express yourself with perfect clearness. That is the fine thing about you, that you do not seek any circumlocution; you say things with an admirable precision.

DON JUAN

Come, let me have supper as soon as possible. A chair, boy.

SCENE II

DON JUAN, SGANARELLE, LA VIOLETTE, RAGOTIN

LA VIOLETTE

Sir, here is your furnisher, Mr. Dimanche, who wants to speak with you.

SGANARELLE

Good. That is all we needed, the compliments of a creditor! What business has he to come and ask us for money; and why did n't you tell him your master was not at home?

LA VIOLETTE

That 's what I 've been telling him for three quarters of an hour, but he won't believe it, and has sat down there to wait.

SGANARELLE

Let him wait as long as he pleases.

DON JUAN

No, on the contrary, show him in. 'T is very bad policy to hide from your creditors. It 's well to pay them one way or another; and I have a secret for sending them away satisfied without giving up a penny.

SCENE III

DON JUAN, MR. DIMANCHE, SGANARELLE, LA VIOLETTE, RAGOTIN

DON JUAN, *showing him great civilities*

Ah! Mr. Dimanche, come in. How very glad I am to see you, and how angry with my servants that they did not show you in at once! I had given orders that no one should be admitted; but this did not apply to you, and you have a right never to find my door closed against you.

MR. DIMANCHE

Sir, I am deeply obliged to you.

DON JUAN, *speaking to his lackeys*

Zounds, you rascals, I 'll teach you to keep Mr. Dimanche waiting, and let you know who 's who.

MR. DIMANCHE

Sir, 't is no matter.

DON JUAN, *to Mr. Dimanche*

What! tell you I 'm not at home, you, Mr. Dimanche, my best friend!

MR. DIMANCHE

Sir, I am your humble servant. I came to . . .

DON JUAN

Here, quick, a seat for Mr. Dimanche.

MR. DIMANCHE

Sir, I am very well as I am.

DON JUAN

No, by no means, I must have you seated beside me.

MR. DIMANCHE

That is not necessary, sir.

DON JUAN

Take away that folding stool, and bring an arm-chair.

MR. DIMANCHE

Sir, you are jesting, and . . .

DON JUAN

No, no, I know what I owe you; and I will not let any difference be made between us.

MR. DIMANCHE

Sir . . .

DON JUAN

Come, sit down.

MR. DIMANCHE

It is not necessary, sir, and I have only a word to say. I was coming to . . .

DON JUAN

Sit down here, I say.

MR. DIMANCHE

No, sir, I am very well as I am. I have come to . . .

DON JUAN

No, I won't listen to you till you sit down.

MR. DIMANCHE

Sir, I will do so, since you insist. I . . .

DON JUAN

Zounds! Mr. Dimanche, you are looking mighty well.

MR. DIMANCHE

Yes, sir, at your service. I come to . . .

DON JUAN

You look the very picture of health—rosy lips, ruddy complexion, sparkling eyes.

MR. DIMANCHE

I should like to . . .

DON JUAN

How is Mrs. Dimanche, your good lady?

MR. DIMANCHE

Very well, sir, thank Heaven.

DON JUAN

She 's a fine woman.

MR. DIMANCHE

She 's your servant, sir. I come to . . .

DON JUAN

And your little girl, Claudine, how is she?

MR. DIMANCHE

As well as can be.

DON JUAN

What a pretty little girl she is! I love her with all my heart.

MR. DIMANCHE

'T is too much honour you do her, sir. I want . . .

DON JUAN

And does little Colin make as much noise as ever with his drum?

MR. DIMANCHE

As much as ever, sir. I . . .

DON JUAN

And your little dog, Brusquet? Does he growl as loud as ever, and bite as lustily at the legs of your visitors?

MR. DIMANCHE

More than ever, sir, and we cannot master him.

DON JUAN

Do not be surprised that I should ask news of all your family, for I take a deep interest in them.

MR. DIMANCHE

We are infinitely obliged to you, sir. I . . .

DON JUAN, *holding out his hand*

Shake hands upon it then, Mr. Dimanche. Are you really a friend of mine?

MR. DIMANCHE

Sir, I am your servant.

DON JUAN

Zounds! I am yours with all my heart.

MR. DIMANCHE

You do me too much honour. I . . .

DON JUAN

There is nothing I would not do for you.

MR. DIMANCHE

Sir, you are far too kind.

DON JUAN

And that without selfish motives, I beg you to believe me.

MR. DIMANCHE

I have not deserved this favour, certainly. But, sir . . .

DON JUAN

Come, Mr. Dimanche, will you have supper with me, without any ceremony?

MR. DIMANCHE

No, sir; I must return home presently. I . . .

DON JUAN, *getting up*

Here, quick, a torch to escort Mr. Dimanche, and have four or five of my people take their muskets and attend him.

MR. DIMANCHE, *getting up also*

Sir, there is no need, and I can very well go alone. But . . . (*Sganarelle instantly removes the chairs.*)

DON JUAN

What! I insist that they escort you; I take too much interest in you to let you go alone. I am your servant, and what is more, your debtor.

MR. DIMANCHE

Ah! sir . . .

DON JUAN

'T is a thing I don't hide, I tell everyone of it.

MR. DIMANCHE

If . . .

DON JUAN

Shall I show you to the door?

MR. DIMANCHE

Ah! sir, you are joking! Sir . . .

DON JUAN

Embrace me then, I pray you. And I beg you once more to rest assured that I am entirely yours, and that there is nothing in the world I would not do to serve you. (*Exit.*)

SCENE IV

Mr. Dimanche, Sganarelle

SGANARELLE

It must be owned that you have in my master a friend who loves you well.

MR. DIMANCHE

'T is true; he pays me so many civilities and compliments that I can never ask him for money.

SGANARELLE

I assure you that all his household would die for you; and I wish something might happen to you, or somebody might take a notion to cudgel you, so that you could see how . . .

MR. DIMANCHE

I believe you; but, Sganarelle, I beg you to say just a little word to him about my money.

SGANARELLE

Oh! don't trouble yourself. He will pay you, as sure as can be.

MR. DIMANCHE

But, Sganarelle, you owe me something on your own account.

SGANARELLE

Fie! don't speak of it.

MR. DIMANCHE

What? I . . .

SGANARELLE

Don't I know very well what I owe you?

MR. DIMANCHE

But . . .

SGANARELLE

Come, Mr. Dimanche, I will light you to the door.

MR. DIMANCHE

But, my money?

SGANARELLE, *taking Mr. Dimanche by the arm*

Are you joking?

MR. DIMANCHE

I want . . .

SGANARELLE, *pulling him along*

Eh!

MR. DIMANCHE

I must . . .

SGANARELLE, *pushing him toward the door*

Nonsense.

MR. DIMANCHE

But . . .

SGANARELLE, *still pushing him*

Fie!

MR. DIMANCHE

I . . .

SGANARELLE, *pushing him completely off the stage*

Fie! I tell you!

SCENE V

DON JUAN, SGANARELLE, LA VIOLETTE

LA VIOLETTE, *to Don Juan*

Sir, here is your father.

DON JUAN

Ah! that 's the last straw! It needed but this visit to drive me mad.

SCENE VI

DON LOUIS, DON JUAN, SGANARELLE

DON LOUIS

I see very well that I am unwelcome, and that you would gladly dispense with my visit. 'T is true, we are each a thorn in the flesh to the other; and if you are weary of the sight of me, I am exceedingly weary too of your behaviour. Alas! how little we know what we are about when we do not leave to Heaven the decision of what is best for us, when we try to be wiser than it is, and persist in importuning it with our blind desires and our ill-considered prayers. I wished for a son, with intense ardour, and prayed for one unceasingly, with passionate longing; and this son that I obtained by wearying Heaven with my entreaties is the sorrow and torment of the very life to which I thought he would bring joy and

consolation. How do you think I can look on this multitude of unworthy actions, whose evil appearance can hardly be palliated before the world; this continuous succession of disgraceful quarrels, which compel us time and again to weary the kindness of our King, and which have exhausted in his esteem the merit of my services and the influence of my friends? Ah! how low you have fallen! Do you not blush to be so little worthy of your birth! Have you any right, tell me, to the least pride in it? And what have you done in the world to be a gentleman? Do you think that it is enough to bear the name and arms of one, and that it brings us glory to be sprung of noble blood, when we live infamously? No, no, birth is nothing where virtue is not. We have no share in the glory of our ancestors except so far as we strive to be like them, and the splendour shed on us by their deeds lays us under obligation to do them the like honour, to follow in their steps, and not to degenerate from their virtues, if we wish to be esteemed their true offspring. So 't is in vain that you descend from such ancestors; they disown you for their blood, and all their illustrious deeds bring you no advantage; on the contrary their lustre reflects upon you only to your dishonour, and their glory is but a torch to light up in the eyes of everyone the shame of your own actions. Know that a man of noble birth who leads an evil life is a monster in nature; virtue is the prime title of nobility; I care much less for the name a man signs than for the deeds he does; and I should feel more esteem for the son of a porter who was a true man, than for the son of a king who lived as you do.

DON JUAN

Sir, if you were seated you could speak more at your ease.

DON LOUIS

Insolent wretch, I will not sit down, nor say any more. I see clearly that all my words make no impression on you; but know, unworthy son, that your father's love has been quite worn out by your conduct; that sooner than you think I shall put a stop to your excesses, forestall the vengeance of Heaven upon you, and wash out by your punishment the shame of having given you life. (*Exit.*)

SCENE VII

DON JUAN, SGANARELLE

DON JUAN, *still addressing his father who has already gone*

Eh! die as soon as you can, 't is the best thing you can do. Each one should have his turn, and it puts me in a passion to see fathers that live as long as their sons. (*He throws himself down in an armchair.*)

SGANARELLE

Oh! sir, you are in the wrong.

DON JUAN, *getting up*

I in the wrong!

SGANARELLE, *trembling*

Sir . . .

DON JUAN

I in the wrong!

SGANARELLE

Yes, sir, you are wrong to have submitted to what he said, and you ought to have put him out by main force. Was anything more impertinent ever seen?—for a father to come and remonstrate with his son, and tell him to mend his ways, to remember his birth, to live like a respectable man, and a hundred other such like absurdities! Can that be endured by such a man as you, who know what 's what? I admire your patience, and if I had been in your place I should have sent him packing. (*Aside.*) O cursed complaisance! how low do you bring me!

DON JUAN

Shall I have supper soon?

SCENE VIII

DON JUAN, SGANARELLE, RAGOTIN

RAGOTIN

Sir, here is a veiled lady come to speak with you.

DON JUAN

What can this be?

SGANARELLE

Let 's see.

SCENE IX

DONNA ELVIRE, *veiled;* DON JUAN, SGANARELLE

DONNA ELVIRE

Do not be surprised, Don Juan, to see me at this hour and in this dress. An urgent motive forces me to pay you this visit; and what I have to say can admit of no delay. I have not come here in anger such as I showed a little while ago; and you see me much changed from what I was this morning. I am no longer the Donna Elvire who prayed for your punishment, and who could think of nothing but threats and revenge. Heaven has banished from my soul all the unworthy passion I felt for you, all the tumultuous ardours of a criminal attachment, all the shameful transports of a gross and earthly love; and has left in my heart for you only an affection purified of all sensual elements, a holy tenderness, an unselfish love that acts not for itself and cares only for your good.

DON JUAN, *aside to Sganarelle.*

I do believe you are weeping?

SGANARELLE

Forgive me.

DONNA ELVIRE

'T is this pure and perfect love that brings me here, for your own good, to tell you of a warning from Heaven, and try to call you back from the precipice you are hurrying toward. Yes, Don Juan, I know all the excesses of your life; and the same

Heaven that has touched my heart and made me see the errors of my own conduct, has inspired me to come to you, and tell you in its name that your offences have exhausted its pity, that its awful anger is about to fall upon you, but that you may still escape it by an immediate repentance, and you have perhaps not a day left to save yourself from the greatest of all misfortunes. As for me, I am no longer bound to you by any earthly tie. I have been reclaimed, thank Heaven, from all my mad thoughts; I have resolved to withdraw from the world, and I ask only for so much life as may suffice to expiate my sin, and to earn by austere penitence my pardon for the blindness into which I was plunged by the violence of a guilty passion. But in my retreat I should feel the deepest affliction if a person whom I once dearly loved should be made a fearful example of Heaven's justice; and 't will be an unspeakable joy to me if I can prevail on you to ward off the dreadful stroke that threatens you. I beseech you, as a last favour, Don Juan, to grant me this sweet consolation; do not refuse me your salvation, which I ask of you with tears, and if you are not touched by your own interests, at least be moved by my prayers, and spare me the cruel grief of seeing you condemned to eternal torment.

SGANARELLE, *aside*

Poor woman!

DONNA ELVIRE

I loved you with deep tenderness, nothing in the world was so dear to me as you were; I forgot my

duty for you, I did everything for you; and the only return I ask is that you amend your life and avert your ruin. Save yourself, I beg you, either for your own sake, or for mine. Once more, Don Juan, I ask it of you with my tears; and if the tears of a woman you have loved are not enough, I conjure you by all that is most capable of moving you.

SGANARELLE, *aside, watching Don Juan*

He has the heart of a tiger!

DONNA ELVIRE

I shall go now. That is all I had to say to you.

DON JUAN

Madam, it is late, stay here. We will lodge you in the best way we can.

DONNA ELVIRE

No, Don Juan, do not detain me any longer.

DON JUAN

Madam, you would give me pleasure by staying, I assure you.

DONNA ELVIRE

No, I tell you; let us not waste time in useless talk. Let me go quickly, do not insist upon escorting me, and think only of profiting by my warning.

SCENE X

DON JUAN, SGANARELLE

DON JUAN

Do you know, I once more felt some little emotion

toward her? I found something attractive in this strange novelty; and her neglected dress, her drooping air, and her tears, rekindled in me some slight embers of a burnt-out fire.

SGANARELLE

Which means that her words had no effect at all upon you.

DON JUAN

Supper, quickly.

SGANARELLE

Very well.

SCENE XI

DON JUAN, SGANARELLE, LA VIOLETTE, RAGOTIN

DON JUAN, *sitting down to the table*

Sganarelle, we must think of reforming, after all.

SGANARELLE

So-ho!

DON JUAN

Yes, faith, we must reform. Twenty or thirty years more of this life, and then we 'll think of our salvation.

SGANARELLE

Oh!

DON JUAN

What do you say to it?

SGANARELLE

Nothing. Here 's the supper. (*He takes a piece from one of the dishes brought in, and puts it in his mouth.*)

DON JUAN

It seems to me your cheek is swollen ; what is it? Speak, will you! What ails you?

SGANARELLE

Nothing.

DON JUAN

Just show me. Zounds! here 's a swelling fallen upon his cheek. Quick, a lancet to open it! The poor fellow cannot bear it any longer, the abscess may choke him. Wait; see how ripe it was! Ah! you rascal!

SGANARELLE

On my word, sir, I wanted to see whether your cook had not put in too much salt or pepper.

DON JUAN

Well, sit down there and eat. I shall need you after I have had supper. You are hungry, I see.

SGANARELLE, *sitting down to the table*

I should think so, sir; I have not had anything to eat since morning. Try this, nothing could be better. (*A lackey takes away Sganarelle's plates as soon as there is anything on them to eat.*) My plate, my plate!

Not so fast, if you please. Zooks! my little man, how quick you are about giving clean plates! And you, little Violette, how well you know when to pour the wine. (*While one lackey gives Sganarelle something to drink, the other takes away his plate again.*)

DON JUAN

Who can be knocking so?

SGANARELLE

Who the deuce can have come to disturb us at our meal?

DON JUAN

I will at least have my supper in peace; I 'll have no one let in.

SGANARELLE

Let me see to it, I 'll go to the door myself.

DON JUAN, *seeing Sganarelle return in terror*

What is the matter? What is it?

SGANARELLE, *nodding his head as the Statue did*

The . . . is there.

DON JUAN

I will go see, and prove that nothing can shake me.

SGANARELLE

Oh! poor Sganarelle, where will you hide?

SCENE XII

DON JUAN, THE STATUE OF THE COMMANDANT, SGANARELLE, LA VIOLETTE, RAGOTIN

DON JUAN, *to his servants*

A chair and a place at the table. Quick, I say. (*Don Juan and the Statue sit down at the table.*) —(*To Sganarelle.*) Come, sit down.

SGANARELLE

I am not hungry now, sir.

DON JUAN

Sit down here, I say. Some drink here. To the Commandant's health! I drink it with you, Sganarelle! Give him some wine.

SGANARELLE

I am not thirsty, sir.

DON JUAN

Drink, and sing your song, to entertain the Commandant.

SGANARELLE

I 've got a cold, sir.

DON JUAN

No matter. Come on. You there (*to his servants*), come and accompany him.

THE STATUE

Don Juan, 't is enough. I invite you to come to supper with me to-morrow. Will you have the courage?

DON JUAN

Yes, I will come, and bring only Sganarelle with me.

SGANARELLE

Thank you, sir, to-morrow is fast day with me.

DON JUAN, *to Sganarelle*

Take that torch.

THE STATUE

He needs no light whom Heaven guides.

ACT V

Open country

SCENE I

DON LOUIS, DON JUAN, SGANARELLE

DON LOUIS

What! Is it possible, my son, that the mercy of Heaven has granted my prayers? Can what you tell me be really true? Are you not deceiving me with a false hope? May I feel any confidence in the surprising news of such a conversion?

DON JUAN, *playing the hypocrite*

Yes, you find me reclaimed from all my errors, I am no longer the same man I was last night, and Heaven has wrought in me a sudden change that will surprise everyone. It has touched my soul and unsealed my eyes; I look with horror upon the long blindness I was lost in, and the criminal disorders of the life I led. I go over all my abominations in my mind, and am amazed that Heaven could bear with them so long, and that it did not twenty times let fall upon my head the shafts of its awful justice. I see what favour its mercy has done me in not punishing me for my crimes, and I mean to profit by it

as I ought, to show forth before all men a sudden change of life, to repair thereby the scandal of my past deeds, and to endeavour to obtain from Heaven a complete remission. That is what I shall now strive for; and I beg you, sir, to join with me in this design, and help me yourself in choosing someone who shall serve as my guide, and under whose direction I may walk with safety in the path upon which I am entering.

DON LOUIS

Oh! my son, how easily a father's love is restored, and how quickly a son's offences vanish at the least word of repentance! I have already forgotten all the grief you caused me, and everything is blotted out by the words I have just heard. I confess, I am beside myself with joy, and shed tears of happiness; all my prayers are granted, and I have nothing more to ask of Heaven. Embrace me, my son, and hold fast, I adjure you, to this laudable resolve. For my part, I will immediately go carry this happy news to your mother, share with her the sweet raptures of my delight, and give thanks to Heaven for the holy resolutions it has vouchsafed to inspire in you.

SCENE II

DON JUAN, SGANARELLE

SGANARELLE

Ah! sir, how great is my joy at seeing you converted! I had been expecting it for a long time;

and now, thanks be to Heaven, all my desires are fulfilled.

DON JUAN

Plague take the booby!

SGANARELLE

How, booby?

DON JUAN

What! You take what I have just said for good money, and think my lips were in agreement with my heart?

SGANARELLE

What! 't is not . . . You don't . . . Your . . . (*Aside.*) Oh! what a man! what a man! what a man!

DON JUAN

No, no, I have not changed, and my sentiments are still the same.

SGANARELLE

You don't yield to the amazing miracle of this moving and speaking statue?

DON JUAN

To be sure there is something in that which I don't understand ; but, whatever it may be, 't is not capable of either convincing my mind or shaking my spirit ; and if I said that I meant to reform my conduct and enter upon an exemplary life, that is a plan I have made out of sheer policy, a useful stratagem, a necessary pretence to which I will force myself to

submit, in order not to offend a father I have need of, and to screen myself, with respect to mankind, from a hundred troublesome adventures that might come upon me. I like to take you into my confidence, Sganarelle, and am glad to have some witness of my real thoughts, and of the true motives that make me act as I do.

SGANARELLE

What! you believe in nothing at all, and yet you mean to set up for a man of virtue.

DON JUAN

And why not? There are so many others like me who try this trade, and use the same mask to deceive the world.

SGANARELLE

Oh! what a man! what a man!

DON JUAN

Nowadays there 's no longer any disgrace in it; hypocrisy is a fashionable vice, and all fashionable vices pass for virtues. The character of a man of virtue is the best of all rôles to play in these times, and the profession of hypocrite has marvellous advantages. 'T is an art whose pretence is always respected; and though it be discovered, no one dares to say anything against it. All the other vices of mankind are exposed to harsh criticism, and everybody feels free to attack them loudly; but hypocrisy is a privileged vice, which lays its finger on everyone's lips, and enjoys in peace its sovereign impunity. By dint of cant you form a close alliance with all the

rest of the party. Whoever offends one, brings them all down upon him; and those who unquestionably act in good faith, and whom everyone knows to be truly in earnest, those, I say, are always dupes of the others; they are innocently taken in by the pretenders, and blindly support those who but ape their own actions. How many I know, who by this stratagem have decorously patched up the disorders of their youth, who make themselves a buckler of the cloak of religion, and under that venerated dress are free to be the worst men in the world! Though people understand their manœuvres, and know them for what they are, they have none the less credit among men; and a downcast look, a canting sigh, and a pair of rolling eyes, easily set right again, so far as society is concerned, whatever they may do. 'T is under this favourable shelter that I mean to take refuge, and set my affairs in order. I shall not abandon my pleasant way of life, but shall be careful to keep my secrets, and take my pleasure without making a noise about it. And in case I should be discovered, I shall, without lifting a finger, find my interests taken up by the whole cabal, and shall be defended by it against any and all men. In fine, here is the true means of doing all I please with impunity. I shall set up as a censor of the actions of others, shall judge ill of everybody, and think well of none but myself. Once I am ever so little offended, I shall never forgive it, and shall simply cherish an irreconcilable hatred. I shall give myself out as the avenger of Heaven's interests; and under this convenient pretext, I shall persecute my enemies, accuse them of impiety, and let loose upon

them those rash zealots who, not knowing what they are about, will raise a public outcry against them, will load them with insults, and will condemn them loudly on their own private authority. 'T is thus we must profit by the weaknesses of mankind; 't is thus a wise man will make the best of the vices of his age.

SGANARELLE

Heavens! what do I hear? You needed but hypocrisy to make you absolutely complete; for it is the height of all abominations. Sir, this last is beyond endurance, and I cannot help speaking out. Do what you please to me; beat me, break every bone in my body, kill me, if you choose; I must unburden my heart, and tell you what I ought as a faithful servant. Know, sir, that the pitcher goes so oft to the well that it comes home broken at last, and as that author whose name I don't know says so aptly, man is in this world like the bird on the bough; the bough is attached to the tree; he who is attached to the tree follows good precepts; good precepts are better than fine words; fine words are found at court; at court there are courtiers; courtiers follow the fashion; fashion follows the fancy; the fancy is a faculty of the soul; the soul is what gives us life; life ends in death; death makes us think of Heaven; Heaven is above the earth; the earth is not the sea; the sea is subject to storms; storms toss ships; ships need a good pilot; a good pilot has prudence; prudence is not in young folk; young folk should obey the old; the old love riches; riches make men rich; rich men are not poor; the poor have necessities; necessity

knows no law; he that knows no law lives like the beasts that perish; and, therefore, you shall be damned to the bottomless pit.

DON JUAN

O excellent argument!

SGANARELLE

After that, if you don't give in, on your own head be it.

SCENE III

DON CARLOS, DON JUAN, SGANARELLE

DON CARLOS

You are well met, Don Juan, and I am glad to speak with you here rather than at your own house, to ask what your decision is. You know that this duty belongs to me, for it was in your presence I took the matter upon me. For my part, I will say in all frankness, I greatly desire to see things amicably arranged. There is nothing I would not do to induce you to take this course, and to see you publicly recognise my sister as your wife.

DON JUAN, *taking a hypocritical tone*

Alas! I wish with all my heart I might give you the satisfaction you desire; but Heaven is directly opposed to it; it has inspired me with the intention of changing my way of life, and I have no other thought now, save to abandon completely all worldly ties, to lay aside as soon as I may every kind of

vanity, and henceforth to correct by my austerity of conduct all the criminal excesses into which I was led by the heat of blind youth.

DON CARLOS

This decision, Don Juan, does not clash at all with what I speak of; and the companionship of a legitimate wife is surely not inconsistent with the praiseworthy thought which Heaven has inspired in you.

DON JUAN

Alas! by no means. 'T is a decision which your sister has herself made also. She is determined to withdraw from the world; and we have both been touched by divine grace at one and the same time.

DON CARLOS

Her retreat cannot give us satisfaction, since it might be ascribed to your scorn of her and of our family, and our honour requires that she should live with you.

DON JUAN

I assure you it cannot be. For my own part, I desired it with all my heart; and again to-day I took counsel with Heaven to that end; but when I consulted it, I heard a voice which said to me that I must not think of your sister, and that with her I certainly could not work out my salvation.

DON CARLOS

Don Juan, do you think to impose on us with these fine excuses?

DON JUAN

I obey the voice of Heaven.

DON CARLOS

What! Do you expect me to be satisfied with such talk?

DON JUAN

'T is the will of Heaven.

DON CARLOS

Have you enticed my sister out of her convent only to abandon her afterwards?

DON JUAN

Heaven so ordains.

DON CARLOS

Shall we suffer this stain upon our family?

DON JUAN

'T is Heaven you must blame.

DON CARLOS

What! Always Heaven!

DON JUAN

Heaven so wills it.

DON CARLOS

Enough. I understand you, Don Juan. 'T is not here I will seek satisfaction of you, the place does not permit of it, but before long I shall find a way of meeting you.

DON JUAN

You will do as you please. You know that I do not lack courage, and can use my sword when it is necessary. I shall presently pass through that little by-way which leads to the great convent; but, for my own part, I declare to you that I am not the one who wishes to fight; Heaven forbids me such a thought; but if you attack me, we shall see what will come of it.

DON CARLOS

We shall see, truly, we shall see.

SCENE IV

DON JUAN, SGANARELLE

SGANARELLE

Sir, what devilish style have you adopted now? This is far worse than the rest, and I should like you better even as you were before. Then I had still some hope of your salvation; but now I despair of it; and I believe that Heaven, which has borne with you till now, will by no means endure this last abomination.

DON JUAN

Go to, Heaven is not so strict as you think; if every time men . . .

SCENE V

DON JUAN, SGANARELLE, A SPECTRE *appearing as a veiled woman*

SGANARELLE, *seeing the spectre*

Oh! sir, 't is Heaven speaking to you, 't is a warning it sends you.

DON JUAN

If Heaven sends me a warning it must speak a little more clearly to make me understand.

THE SPECTRE

Don Juan has but a moment left to profit by Heaven's mercy, and if he repents not now, his destruction is certain.

SGANARELLE

Do you hear, sir?

DON JUAN

Who dares to speak thus? I think I know that voice.

SGANARELLE

Oh! sir, 't is a ghost, I know it by its stalking.

DON JUAN

Ghost, phantom, or devil, I will see what it is.

(*The spectre changes shape, and represents Time, scythe in hand.*,

SGANARELLE

Heavens! Do you see this change, sir?

DON JUAN

No, no, nothing is capable of making me afraid; and I will try with my sword whether 't is flesh or spirit.

(*The spectre disappears as Don Juan is about to strike it.*)

SGANARELLE

Oh! sir, yield to so many proofs, and make haste to repent.

DON JUAN

No, no, whatever happens, it shall not be said that I am capable of repentance. Come, follow me.

SCENE VI

THE STATUE OF THE COMMANDANT, DON JUAN, SGANARELLE

THE STATUE

Stop, Don Juan. Yesterday you gave me your word to come and eat with me.

DON JUAN

Yes. Where shall we go?

THE STATUE

Give me your hand.

DON JUAN

Here it is.

THE STATUE

Don Juan, persistence in sin brings a fearful death; and the mercy of Heaven rejected, opens a path for its thunderbolts.

DON JUAN

O Heaven! what do I feel? An invisible fire is

consuming me, I can bear no more, and my whole body has become a blazing furnace. Ah!

(*The thunder descends upon Don Juan with a loud crash and vivid flashes of lightning. The earth opens and swallows him up; and great flames issue from the abyss into which he fell.*)

SCENE VII

SGANARELLE, *alone*

Oh! my wages! my wages! By his death everyone gets satisfaction. Heaven offended, laws violated, girls led astray, families dishonoured, relatives outraged, wives ruined, husbands driven to despair, they are all satisfied; I am the only unlucky one. My wages, my wages, my wages!

LE TARTUFFE

OU

L'IMPOSTEUR

COMEDIE EN CINQ ACTES

12 MAI 1664–5 FEVRIER 1669

TARTUFFE

OR

THE HYPOCRITE

A COMEDY IN FIVE ACTS

MAY 12, 1664–FEBRUARY 5, 1669

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

Louis XIV entertained his court, in May of 1664, at his recently finished palace and pleasure-grounds of Versailles, with a week of uninterrupted festival. Molière, now the chief furnisher of the king's pleasures, gave during the week four plays: *The Bores; The Forced Marriage; The Princess of Elis*, begun in verse, but hastily finished in prose to be ready for the king's entertainment; and the first three acts of *Tartuffe*. These three acts taken alone must have seemed much less serious than the play as a whole seems to us now. They are in fact made up for the most part of excellent light comedy:—the harangues of Madame Pernelle, the retorts of Dorine, the quarrel and reconciliation of the lovers, the famous scene of "The poor man!", and that of the confounding of Damis. Tartuffe himself does not enter until the second scene of the third act, and in that act he is odious and comical; not, as in the later acts, odious and almost terrifying. The character of Cléante was less seriously conceived than in later versions of the play, since part of his original rôle was later transferred to Dorine. And some of the more serious passages of these three acts as we have them now, especially in the speeches of Cléante, were probably not yet written.

Nevertheless the character of Tartuffe was clearly enough indicated, and the seriousness of Molière's attack upon religious hypocrisy was evident enough, to arouse immediate opposition. Anne of Austria, the

queen-mother, and all the religious or pseudo-religious "cabal" of the court, in which the Jesuits were powerful, united to persuade the young king that Molière's play was dangerous to true religion; and its public representation was forbidden. A contemporary account of the week's festivities says: "Although the play was thought most amusing, yet the king, realising what a resemblance there is between those who in true devoutness seek the way to Heaven, and those who with a vain show of good works none the less do evil, could not in his delicate carefulness for the things that concern religion suffer vice to be made so like virtue, that one might be taken for the other; and therefore, though there was no doubt of the good intent of the author, he forbade the giving of the play in public, and deprived himself of the pleasure of it, that offence might not come to others who were less capable of discerning good from evil." The king was at heart on Molière's side, whatever he might think public policy demanded. "Your majesty," wrote Molière in his first formal petition for leave to give the play, "was so good as to declare that you could find no fault in this comedy, though you forbade me to produce it in public."

The prohibition in fact covered only public performances—although a worthy curate, in a book directed against Molière, calling him "a demon clothed in flesh and dressed as a man . . . . who deserved for his crime of sacrilege and impiety to be condemned to public execution, and that by fire, foretaste of the fires of hell, to expiate this terrible crime of lese-majesty against God, a crime which tends to destroy our Catholic religion," had declared that the king ordered Molière "to suppress and tear in pieces, destroy and burn all that he had yet written of it, and write no more such infamous matter, on pain of his life." Molière made his play known by re-

peated readings (as Beaumarchais was to do with his *Marriage of Figaro* over a century later), and even won the approval of the papal legate Chigi, as he boasts in his first petition; and he gave several private performances under the patronage of those nearest the king. First the king's brother, entertaining part of the court at Villers-Cotteret on September 25, 1664, had Molière produce again the first three acts of *Tartuffe*. Then Condé, the first prince of the blood, had the play produced three times, November 29, 1664, November 8, 1665, and September 20, 1668.

The edition of Molière's works, published in 1682, and edited by La Grange and Vinot, speaks of the play as having been given, at these three performances for Condé, "perfect, complete, and finished." It has therefore been taken for granted by all scholars and editors that the play was completed, practically in the form in which we have it, by November, 1664. There exists however a letter of Condé's son, the Duc d'Enghien, written in October of 1665, and recently published, in which he urges his agent at Paris to beg Molière, in all secrecy, for a performance of *Tartuffe* (the one actually given November 8, 1665), and to ask him, "in case the fourth act of *Tartuffe* be written, whether he could not give that also." The Duc d'Enghien had been present at the performance of November, 1664; if the whole play had been given then, why should he ask doubtfully, just before the performance of November, 1665, whether the fourth act were yet written, and could be given? The only solution yet suggested is that by "written" the Duc d'Enghien may have meant "re-written"—which to say the least seems doubtful. I am inclined to think, in spite of the usual accuracy of La Grange, that the adjectives "perfect, complete, and finished" may rightly have applied to the play only at the two later, or possibly even the last, of the three per-

formances for Condé; and that, contrary to the universally accepted opinion, the play was not finished until after 1664, and possibly even not until 1667, when the first public performance was given. There is further evidence pointing in this direction in a letter written by the French Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Monsieur de Lionne, to the librarian of the ex-Queen of Sweden, Christine, who eagerly wished to arrange a private performance of *Tartuffe*. On February 26, 1666, Monsieur de Lionne writes: "What you request, in behalf of the Queen of Sweden, regarding the comedy of *Tartuffe, which Molière had begun and has never finished*, is entirely impossible, being a matter not in my control, or even in that of the king. . . ." Monsieur Mesnard, who gives this letter in the *Grands Ecrivains* edition of Molière, asks in a note on the line which I have italicised: "Was Monsieur de Lionne so ill informed? Or did he pretend to be?" It is hardly probable that he was ill informed, since the rest of the letter shows familiarity with the king's personal attitude toward the play, and with Molière's personal reasons for not wishing to let it go out of his hands. May we not infer that possibly Monsieur de Lionne was right, and that in February of 1666 Molière had not yet given final shape to the last acts of his play? It is certainly interesting and suggestive to consider the last two acts of *Tartuffe* as perhaps not having been written, in anything like their present form at least, until after *The Misanthrope;* and this would explain their marked contrast, in tone and in mood, with the first three acts, which belong (excepting possibly a few of the more serious passages) to a somewhat earlier and very different period of Molière's life.

In any case he was constantly revising the play. In 1667 he gave it a new title, *The Impostor*, the better to protect himself from the charge of criticising in it men of

true religion; he changed the name of its principal character (for the word *tartuffe* had already come into general use as a common noun, suggesting at once hypocrisy and religious unction) to Panulphe, and made him a man of the world, dressed in the latest fashion, with large wig, little hat, short sword, and "lace all over his clothes," to avoid the resemblance of the black-robed lay confessor Tartuffe with the priesthood; and, as he says, "toning down the play in many places, cut out everything which it seemed possible could furnish the shadow of a pretext to the famous originals of the portrait; but all to no purpose." In this form the play was produced at Paris, August 5, 1667, while the king, who it seems had orally given permission for its production if properly revised, was absent with the army in Flanders; on the next day the President of the highest court in Paris issued an injunction forbidding further performances, and five days later the Archbishop of Paris promulgated an order forbidding all persons to take part in, read, or hear the play, in public or in private, under penalty of excommunication. Molière at once closed his theatre, and despatched two of his chief actors with his second petition to the king, who promised to take up the matter again on his return. It was not for a year and a half, however, that formal and authoritative permission was finally granted, and the play was given, beginning on February 5, 1669, to the largest audiences that had ever crowded Molière's theatre. In the meanwhile Molière had still further revised his work (as we know from comparing our present text with a rather detailed contemporary account of the single performance of 1667), had restored the name Tartuffe, and had given to the rôle of Cléante its seriousness and importance as representing his own ideas and his answer to his enemies.

This answer he repeated, in his own person, in the preface to the first edition of the play:

"If you will take the trouble to examine my comedy in good faith, you will surely see that my intentions are throughout innocent, and that the play in no wise tends to turn to ridicule the things that we ought to reverence; that I have shown in it all that carefulness which the delicacy of the subject called for; and that I have used all the art and the pains that I could, to make clear the distinction between your hypocrite and your man of true devoutness. I have employed to that end two whole acts in preparing the entry of my scoundrel. He does not leave the auditor one moment in doubt; . . . he says nothing, he does nothing, but what paints him to the spectators as a rascal, and sets off the character of the truly virtuous man I put in opposition to him . . .

"If the office of comedy is to correct the vices of men, I know not why any should have a special privilege of exemption. This one [hypocrisy] has consequences far more dangerous to the State than all the others. . . . 'T is a mighty stroke at any vice to make it the laughing-stock of everybody; for men will easily suffer reproof; but they can by no means endure mockery. They will consent to be wicked, but not to be ridiculous."

CHARACTERS	ACTORS
MADAME PERNELLE, mother of Orgon	LOUIS BEJART
ORGON, husband of Elmire	MOLIERE
ELMIRE, wife of Orgon	Mlle. MOLIERE
DAMIS, son of Orgon	HUBERT
MARIANE, daughter of Orgon, in love with Valère	Mlle. DEBRIE
VALERE, in love with Mariane	LA GRANGE
CLEANTE, brother-in-law of Orgon	LA THORILLIERE
TARTUFFE, a hypocrite	DU CROISY
DORINE, Mariane's maid	MADELEINE BEJART
M. LOYAL, a bailiff	DEBRIE
A Police Officer	
FLIPOTTE, Madame Pernelle's servant	

The Scene is at Paris

TARTUFFE

A COMEDY

ACT I

SCENE I

MADAME PERNELLE and FLIPOTTE, her servant; ELMIRE, MARIANE, CLEANTE, DAMIS, DORINE

MADAME PERNELLE

Come, come, Flipotte, and let me get away.

ELMIRE

You hurry so, I hardly can attend you.

MADAME PERNELLE

Then don't, my daughter-in-law. Stay where you are.
I can dispense with your polite attentions.

ELMIRE

We 're only paying what is due you, mother.
Why must you go away in such a hurry?

MADAME PERNELLE

Because I can't endure your carryings-on,
And no one takes the slightest pains to please me.
I leave your house, I tell you, quite disgusted;

You do the opposite of my instructions;
You 've no respect for anything; each one
Must have his say; it 's perfect pandemonium.

DORINE

If . . .

MADAME PERNELLE

You 're a servant wench, my girl, and much
Too full of gab, and too impertinent
And free with your advice on all occasions.

DAMIS

But . . .

MADAME PERNELLE

You 're a fool, my boy—f, o, o, l
Just spells your name. Let grandma tell you that.
I 've said a hundred times to my poor son,
Your father, that you 'd never come to good
Or give him anything but plague and torment.

MARIANE

I think . . .

MADAME PERNELLE

O dearie me, his little sister!
You 're all demureness, butter would n't melt
In *your* mouth, one would think to look at you.
Still waters, though, they say . . . you know
the proverb;
And I don't like your doings on the sly.

ELMIRE

But, mother . . .

MADAME PERNELLE

Daughter, by your leave, your conduct
In everything is altogether wrong;
You ought to set a good example for 'em;
Their dear departed mother did much better.
You are extravagant; and it offends me,
To see you always decked out like a princess.
A woman who would please her husband's eyes
Alone, wants no such wealth of fineries.

CLEANTE

But, madam, after all . . .

MADAME PERNELLE

Sir, as for you,
The lady's brother, I esteem you highly,
Love, and respect you. But, sir, all the same,
If I were in my son's, her husband's, place,
I 'd urgently entreat you not to come
Within our doors. You preach a way of living
That decent people cannot tolerate.
I 'm rather frank with you; but that 's my way—
I don't mince matters, when I mean a thing.

DAMIS

Mr. Tartuffe, your friend, is mighty lucky . . .

MADAME PERNELLE

He is a holy man, and must be heeded;
I can't endure, with any show of patience,
To hear a scatterbrains like you attack him.

DAMIS

What! Shall I let a bigot criticaster
Come and usurp a tyrant's power here?

And shall we never dare amuse ourselves
Till this fine gentleman deigns to consent?

DORINE

If we must hark to him, and heed his maxims,
There 's not a thing we do but what 's a crime;
He censures everything, this zealous carper.

MADAME PERNELLE

And all he censures is well censured, too.
He wants to guide you on the way to heaven;
My son should train you all to love him well.

DAMIS

No, madam, look you, nothing—not my father
Nor anything—can make me tolerate him.
I should belie my feelings not to say so.
His actions rouse my wrath at every turn;
And I foresee that there must come of it
An open rupture with this sneaking scoundrel.

DORINE

Besides, 't is downright scandalous to see
This unknown upstart master of the house—
This vagabond, who had n't, when he came,
Shoes to his feet, or clothing worth six farthings,
And who so far forgets his place, as now
To censure everything, and rule the roast!

MADAME PERNELLE

Eh! Mercy sakes alive! Things would go better
If all were governed by his pious orders.

DORINE

He passes for a saint in your opinion.
In fact, he 's nothing but a hypocrite.

MADAME PERNELLE

Just listen to her tongue!

DORINE

I would n't trust him,
Nor yet his Lawrence, without bonds and surety.

MADAME PERNELLE

I don't know what the servant's character
May be; but I can guarantee the master
A holy man. You hate him and reject him
Because he tells home truths to all of you.
'T is sin alone that moves his heart to anger,
And heaven's interest is his only motive.

DORINE

Of course. But why, especially of late,
Can he let nobody come near the house?
Is heaven offended at a civil call
That he should make so great a fuss about it?
I 'll tell you, if you like, just what I think;
(*Pointing to Elmire*)
Upon my word, he 's jealous of our mistress.

MADAME PERNELLE

You hold your tongue, and think what you are saying.
He 's not alone in censuring these visits;
The turmoil that attends your sort of people,
Their carriages forever at the door,

And all their noisy footmen, flocked together,
Annoy the neighborhood, and raise a scandal.
I 'd gladly think there 's nothing really wrong;
But it makes talk; and that 's not as it should be.

CLEANTE

Eh! madam, can you hope to keep folk's tongues
From wagging? It would be a grievous thing
If, for the fear of idle talk about us,
We had to sacrifice our friends. No, no;
Even if we could bring ourselves to do it,
Think you that everyone would then be silenced?
Against backbiting there is no defence.
So let us try to live in innocence,
To silly tattle pay no heed at all,
And leave the gossips free to vent their gall.

DORINE

Our neighbour Daphne, and her little husband,
Must be the ones who slander us, I 'm thinking.
Those whose own conduct 's most ridiculous,
Are always quickest to speak ill of others;
They never fail to seize at once upon
The slightest hint of any love affair,
And spread the news of it with glee, and give it
The character they 'd have the world believe in.
By others' actions, painted in their colours,
They hope to justify their own; they think,
In the false hope of some resemblance, either
To make their own intrigues seem innocent,
Or else to make their neighbours share the blame
Which they are loaded with by everybody.

MADAME PERNELLE

These arguments are nothing to the purpose.
Orante, we all know, lives a perfect life;
Her thoughts are all of heaven; and I have heard
That she condemns the company you keep.

DORINE

O admirable pattern! Virtuous dame!
She lives the model of austerity;
But age has brought this piety upon her,
And she 's a prude, now she can't help herself.
As long as she could capture men's attentions
She made the most of her advantages;
But, now she sees her beauty vanishing,
She wants to leave the world, that 's leaving her,
And in the specious veil of haughty virtue
She 'd hide the weakness of her worn-out charms.
That is the way with all your old coquettes;
They find it hard to see their lovers leave 'em;
And thus abandoned, their forlorn estate
Can find no occupation but a prude's.
These pious dames, in their austerity,
Must carp at everything, and pardon nothing.
They loudly blame their neighbours' way of living,
Not for religion's sake, but out of envy,
Because they can't endure to see another
Enjoy the pleasures age has weaned them from.

MADAME PERNELLE, *to Elmire*

There! That 's the kind of rigmarole to please you,
Daughter-in-law. One never has a chance

To get a word in edgewise, at your house,
Because this lady holds the floor all day;
But none the less, I mean to have my say, too.
I tell you that my son did nothing wiser
In all his life, than take this godly man
Into his household; heaven sent him here,
In your great need, to make you all repent;
For your salvation, you must hearken to him;
He censures nothing but deserves his censure.
These visits, these assemblies, and these balls,
Are all inventions of the evil spirit.
You never hear a word of godliness
At them—but idle cackle, nonsense, flimflam.
Our neighbour often comes in for a share,
The talk flies fast, and scandal fills the air;
It makes a sober person's head go round,
At these assemblies, just to hear the sound
Of so much gab, with not a word to say;
And as a learned man remarked one day
Most aptly, 't is the Tower of Babylon,
Where all, beyond all limit, babble on.
And just to tell you how this point came in . . .

(*To Cléante*)

So! Now the gentleman must snicker, must he?
Go find fools like yourself to make you laugh
And don't . . .

(*To Elmire*)

Daughter, good-bye; not one word more.
As for this house, I leave the half unsaid;
But I shan't soon set foot in it again.

(*Cuffing Flipotte*)

Come, you! What makes you dream and stand agape,
Hussy! I 'll warm your ears in proper shape!
March, trollop, march!

SCENE II

CLEANTE, DORINE

CLEANTE

I won't escort her down,
For fear she might fall foul of me again;
The good old lady . . .

DORINE

Bless us! What a pity
She should n't hear the way you speak of her!
She 'd surely tell you you 're too "good" by half,
And that she 's not so "old" as all that, neither!

CLEANTE

How she got angry with us, all for nothing!
And how she seems possessed with her Tartuffe!

DORINE

Her case is nothing, though, beside her son's!
To see him, you would say he 's ten times worse!
His conduct in our late unpleasantness[1]
Had won him much esteem, and proved his courage
In service of his king; but now he 's like
A man besotted, since he 's been so taken

[1] Referring to the rebellion called La Fronde, during the minority of Louis XIV.

With this Tartuffe. He calls him brother, loves him
A hundred times as much as mother, son,
Daughter, and wife. He tells him all his secrets
And lets him guide his acts, and rule his conscience.
He fondles and embraces him; a sweetheart
Could not, I think, be loved more tenderly;
At table he must have the seat of honour,
While with delight our master sees him eat
As much as six men could; we must give up
The choicest tidbits to him; if he belches,
('t is a servant speaking)[1]
Master exclaims: "God bless you!"—Oh, he dotes
Upon him; he 's his universe, his hero;
He 's lost in constant admiration, quotes him
On all occasions, takes his trifling acts
For wonders, and his words for oracles.
The fellow knows his dupe, and makes the most on 't,
He fools him with a hundred masks of virtue,
Gets money from him all the time by canting,
And takes upon himself to carp at us.
Even his silly coxcomb of a lackey
Makes it his business to instruct us too;
He comes with rolling eyes to preach at us,
And throws away our ribbons, rouge, and patches.
The wretch, the other day, tore up a kerchief
That he had found, pressed in the *Golden Legend*,
Calling it horrid crime for us to mingle
The devil's finery with holy things.

[1] Molière's note, inserted in the text of all the old editions. It is a curious illustration of the desire for uniformity and dignity of style in dramatic verse of the seventeenth century, that Molière feels called on to apologize for a touch of realism like this. Indeed, these lines were even omitted when the play was given.

SCENE III

ELMIRE, MARIANE, DAMIS, CLEANTE, DORINE

ELMIRE, *to Cléante*

You 're very lucky to have missed the speech
She gave us at the door. I see my husband
Is home again. He has n't seen me yet,
So I 'll go up and wait till he comes in.

CLEANTE

And I, to save time, will await him here ;
I 'll merely say good-morning, and be gone.

SCENE IV

CLEANTE, DAMIS, DORINE

DAMIS

I wish you 'd say a word to him, about
My sister's marriage ; I suspect Tartuffe
Opposes it, and puts my father up
To all these wretched shifts. You know, besides,
How nearly I 'm concerned in it myself ;
If love unites my sister and Valère,
I love his sister too ; and if this marriage
Were to . . .

DORINE

He 's coming.

SCENE V

ORGON, CLEANTE, DORINE

ORGON

Ah ! Good morning, brother.

CLEANTE

I was just going, but am glad to greet you.
Things are not far advanced yet, in the country?

ORGON

Dorine . . .

(To Cléante)

Just wait a bit, please, brother-in-law.
Let me allay my first anxiety
By asking news about the family.

(To Dorine)

Has everything gone well these last two days?
What 's happening? And how is everybody?

DORINE

Madam had fever, and a splitting headache
Day before yesterday, all day and evening.

ORGON

And how about Tartuffe?

DORINE

Tartuffe? He 's well;
He 's mighty well; stout, fat, fair, rosy-lipped.

ORGON

Poor man!

DORINE

At evening she had nausea
And could n't touch a single thing for supper,
Her headache still was so severe.

ORGON

And how
About Tartuffe?

DORINE

He supped alone, before her,
And unctuously ate up two partridges,
As well as half a leg o' mutton, deviled.

ORGON

Poor man!

DORINE

All night she could n't get a wink
Of sleep, the fever racked her so; and we
Had to sit up with her till daylight.

ORGON

How
About Tartuffe?

DORINE

Gently inclined to slumbe
He left the table, went into his room,
Got himself straight into a good warm bed,
And slept quite undisturbed until next morning.

ORGON

Poor man!

DORINE

At last she let us all persuade her,
And got up courage to be bled; and then
She was relieved at once.

ORGON

And how about
Tartuffe?

DORINE

He plucked up courage properly,
Bravely entrenched his soul against all evils,
And, to replace the blood that she had lost,
He drank at breakfast four huge draughts of wine.

ORGON

Poor man!

DORINE

So now they both are doing well;
And I 'll go straightway and inform my mistress
How pleased you are at her recovery.

SCENE VI

ORGON, CLEANTE

CLEANTE

Brother, she ridicules you to your face;
And I, though I don't want to make you angry,
Must tell you candidly that she 's quite right.
Was such infatuation ever heard of?
And can a man to-day have charms to make you
Forget all else, relieve his poverty,
Give him a home, and then . . . ?

ORGON

Stop there, good brother,
You do not know the man you 're speaking of.

CLEANTE

Since you will have it so, I do not know him;
But after all, to tell what sort of man
He is . . .

ORGON

Dear brother, you 'd be charmed to know him;
Your raptures over him would have no end.
He is a man . . . who . . . ah! . . . in fact . . .
a man.
Whoever does his will, knows perfect peace,
And counts the whole world else, as so much dung.
His converse has transformed me quite; he weans
My heart from every friendship, teaches me
To have no love for anything on earth;
And I could see my brother, children, mother,
And wife, all die, and never care—a snap.

CLEANTE

Your feelings are humane, I must say, brother!

ORGON

Ah! If you 'd seen him, as I saw him first,
You would have loved him just as much as I.
He came to church each day, with contrite mien,
Kneeled, on both knees, right opposite my place,
And drew the eyes of all the congregation,
To watch the fervour of his prayers to heaven;
With deep-drawn sighs and great ejaculations,
He humbly kissed the earth at every moment;
And when I left the church, he ran before me
To give me holy water at the door.
I learned his poverty, and who he was,

By questioning his servant, who is like him,
And gave him gifts; but in his modesty
He always wanted to return a part.
"It is too much," he 'd say, "too much by half;
I am not worthy of your pity." Then,
When I refused to take it back, he 'd go,
Before my eyes, and give it to the poor.
At length heaven bade me take him to my home,
And since that day, all seems to prosper here.
He censures everything, and for my sake
He even takes great interest in my wife;
He lets me know who ogles her, and seems
Six times as jealous as I am myself.
You 'd not believe how far his zeal can go:
He calls himself a sinner just for trifles;
The merest nothing is enough to shock him;
So much so, that the other day I heard him
Accuse himself for having, while at prayer,
In too much anger caught and killed a flea.

CLEANTE

Zounds, brother, you are mad, I think! Or else
You 're making sport of me, with such a speech.
What are you driving at with all this nonsense . . . ?

ORGON

Brother, your language smacks of atheism;
And I suspect your soul 's a little tainted
Therewith. I 've preached to you a score of times
That you 'll draw down some judgment on your head.

CLEANTE

That is the usual strain of all your kind;

They must have every one as blind as they.
They call you atheist if you have good eyes;
And if you don't adore their vain grimaces,
You 've neither faith nor care for sacred things.
No, no; such talk can't frighten me; I know
What I am saying; heaven sees my heart.
We 're not the dupes of all your canting mummers;
There are false heroes—and false devotees;
And as true heroes never are the ones
Who make much noise about their deeds of honour,
Just so true devotees, whom we should follow,
Are not the ones who make so much vain show.
What! Will you find no difference between
Hypocrisy and genuine devoutness?
And will you treat them both alike, and pay
The self-same honour both to masks and faces,
Set artifice beside sincerity,
Confuse the semblance with reality,
Esteem a phantom like a living person,
And counterfeit as good as honest coin?
Men, for the most part, are strange creatures, truly!
You never find them keep the golden mean;
The limits of good sense, too narrow for them,
Must always be passed by, in each direction;
They often spoil the noblest things, because
They go too far, and push them to extremes.
I merely say this by the way, good brother.

ORGON

You are the sole expounder of the doctrine;
Wisdom shall die with you, no doubt, good brother,
You are the only wise, the sole enlightened,

The oracle, the Cato, of our age.
All men, compared to you, are downright fools.

CLEANTE

I 'm not the sole expounder of the doctrine,
And wisdom shall not die with me, good brother.
But this I know, though it be all my knowledge,
That there 's a difference 'twixt false and true.
And as I find no kind of hero more
To be admired than men of true religion,
Nothing more noble or more beautiful
Than is the holy zeal of true devoutness;
Just so I think there 's naught more odious
Than whited sepulchres of outward unction,
Those bare-faced charlatans, those hireling zealots,
Whose sacrilegious, treacherous pretence
Deceives at will, and with impunity
Makes mockery of all that men hold sacred;
Men who, enslaved to selfish interests,
Make trade and merchandise of godliness,
And try to purchase influence and office
With false eye-rollings and affected raptures;
Those men, I say, who with uncommon zeal
Seek their own fortunes on the road to heaven;
Who, skilled in prayer, have always much to ask,
And live at court to preach retirement;
Who reconcile religion with their vices,
Are quick to anger, vengeful, faithless, tricky,
And, to destroy a man, will have the boldness
To call their private grudge the cause of heaven;
All the more dangerous, since in their anger
They use against us weapons men revere,
And since they make the world applaud their passion,

And seek to stab us with a sacred sword.
There are too many of this canting kind.
Still, the sincere are easy to distinguish;
And many splendid patterns may be found,
In our own time, before our very eyes.
Look at Ariston, Périandre, Oronte,
Alcidamas, Clitandre, and Polydore;
No one denies their claim to true religion;
Yet they 're no braggadocios of virtue,
They do not make insufferable display,
And their religion's human, tractable;
They are not always judging all our actions,
They 'd think such judgment savoured of presumption;
And, leaving pride of words to other men,
'T is by their deeds alone they censure ours.
Evil appearances find little credit
With them; they even incline to think the best
Of others. No caballers, no intriguers,
They mind the business of their own right living.
They don't attack a sinner tooth and nail,
For sin 's the only object of their hatred;
Nor are they over-zealous to attempt
Far more in heaven's behalf than heaven would have 'em.
That is my kind of man, that is true living,
That is the pattern we should set ourselves.
Your fellow was not fashioned on this model;
You 're quite sincere in boasting of his zeal;
But you 're deceived, I think, by false pretences.

ORGON

My dear good brother-in-law, have you quite done?

CLEANTE

Yes.

ORGON

I 'm your humble servant.

(*Starts to go.*)

CLEANTE

Just a word.
We 'll drop that other subject. But you know
Valère has had the promise of your daughter.

ORGON

Yes.

CLEANTE

You had named the happy day.

ORGON

'T is true.

CLEANTE

Then why put off the celebration of it?

ORGON

I can't say.

CLEANTE

Can you have some other plan
In mind?

ORGON

Perhaps.

CLEANTE

You mean to break your word?

ORGON

I don't say that.

CLEANTE

I hope no obstacle
Can keep you from performing what you 've promised.

ORGON

Well, that depends.

CLEANTE

Why must you beat about?
Valère has sent me here to settle matters.

ORGON

Heaven be praised!

CLEANTE

What answer shall I take him?

ORGON

Why, anything you please.

CLEANTE

But we must know
Your plans. What are they?

ORGON

I shall do the will
Of Heaven.

CLEANTE

Come, be serious. You 've given
Your promise to Valère. Now will you keep it?

ORGON

Good-bye.

CLEANTE, *alone*

His love, methinks, has much to fear;
I must go let him know what 's happening here.

ACT II

SCENE I

ORGON, MARIANE

ORGON

Now, Mariane.

MARIANE

Yes, father ?

ORGON

Come ; I 'll tell you
A secret.

MARIANE

Yes . . . What are you looking for?

ORGON, *looking into a small closet-room*

To see there 's no one there to spy upon us ;
That little closet 's mighty fit to hide in.
There! We 're all right now. Mariane, in you
I 've always found a daughter dutiful
And gentle. So I 've always loved you dearly.

MARIANE

I 'm grateful for your fatherly affection,

ORGON

Well spoken, daughter. Now, prove you deserve it
By doing as I wish in all respects.

MARIANE

To do so is the height of my ambition.

ORGON

Excellent well. What say you of—Tartuffe?

MARIANE

Who? I?

ORGON

Yes, you. Look to it how you answer.

MARIANE

Why! I 'll say of him—anything you please.

SCENE II

ORGON, MARIANE; DORINE, *coming in quietly, and standing behind Orgon, so that he does not see her*

ORGON

Well spoken. A good girl. Say then, my daughter,
That all his person shines with noble merit,
That he has won your heart, and you would like
To have him, by my choice, become your husband.
Eh?

MARIANE

Eh?

ORGON

What say you?

MARIANE

Please, what did you say?

ORGON

What?

MARIANE

Surely I mistook you, sir?

ORGON

How now?

MARIANE

Who is it, father, you would have me say
Has won my heart, and I would like to have
Become my husband, by your choice?

ORGON

Tartuffe.

MARIANE

But, father, I protest it is n't true!
Why should you make me tell this dreadful lie?

ORGON

Because I mean to have it be the truth.
Let this suffice for you: I 've settled it.

MARIANE

What, father, you would . . . ?

ORGON

Yes, child, I 'm resolved
To graft Tartuffe into my family.
So he must be your husband. That I 've settled.
And since your duty . . .

(*Seeing Dorine*)

What are you doing there?
Your curiosity is keen, my girl,
To make you come eavesdropping on us so.

DORINE

Upon my word, I don't know how the rumour
Got started—if 't was guess-work or mere chance—
But I had heard already of this match,
And treated it as utter stuff and nonsense.

ORGON

What! Is the thing incredible?

DORINE

So much so
I don't believe it even from yourself, sir.

ORGON

I know a way to make you credit it.

DORINE

No, no, you 're telling us a fairy tale!

ORGON

I 'm telling you just what will happen shortly.

DORINE

Stuff!

ORGON

Daughter, what I say is in good earnest.

DORINE

There, there, don't take your father seriously;
He 's fooling.

ORGON

But I tell you . . .

DORINE

No. No use.
They won't believe you.

ORGON

If I let my anger . . .

DORINE

Well, then, we do believe you; and the worse
For you it is. What! Can a grown-up man
With that expanse of beard across his face
Be mad enough to want . . . ?

ORGON

You hark to me:
You 've taken on yourself here in this house
A sort of free familiarity
That I don't like, I tell you frankly, girl.

DORINE

There, there, let 's not get angry, sir, I beg you.
But are you making game of everybody?
Your daughter's not cut out for bigot's meat;
And he has more important things to think of.
Besides, what can you gain by such a match?
How can a man of wealth, like you, go choose
A wretched vagabond for son-in-law?

ORGON

You hold your tongue. And know, the less he has,
The better cause have we to honour him.
His poverty is honest poverty;
It should exalt him more than worldly grandeur,
For he has let himself be robbed of all,
Through careless disregard of temporal things
And fixed attachment to the things eternal.
My help may set him on his feet again,
Win back his property—a fair estate
He has at home, so I 'm informed—and prove him
For what he is, a true-born gentleman.

DORINE

Yes, so he says himself. Such vanity
But ill accords with pious living, sir.
The man who cares for holiness alone
Should not so loudly boast his name and birth;
The humble ways of genuine devoutness
Brook not so much display of earthly pride.
Why should he be so vain? . . . But I offend you:
Let 's leave his rank then—take the man himself:
Can you without compunction give a man
Like him possession of a girl like her!
Think what a scandal 's sure to come of it!
Virtue is at the mercy of the fates,
When a girl 's married to a man she hates;
The best intent to live an honest woman
Depends upon the husband's being human,
And men whose brows are pointed at afar
May thank themselves their wives are what they are.
For to be true is more than woman can,
With husbands built upon a certain plan;

And he who weds his child against her will
Owes heaven account for it, if she do ill.
Think then what perils wait on your design.

ORGON, *to Mariane*

So! I must learn what 's what from her, you see!

DORINE

You might do worse than follow my advice.

ORGON

Daughter, we can't waste time upon this nonsense;
I know what 's good for you, and I 'm your father.
True, I had promised you to young Valère;
But, first, they tell me he 's inclined to gamble,
And then, I fear his faith is not quite sound.
I have n't noticed that he 's regular
At church.

DORINE

You 'd have him run there just when you do,
Like those who go on purpose to be seen?

ORGON

I don't ask your opinion on the matter.
In short, the other is in Heaven's best graces,
And that is riches quite beyond compare.
This match will bring you every joy you long for;
'T will be all steeped in sweetness and delight.
You 'll live together, in your faithful loves,
Like two sweet children, like two turtle-doves;
You 'll never fall to quarrel, scold, or tease,
And you may do with him whate'er you please.

DORINE

With him? Do naught but give him horns, I 'll warrant.

ORGON

Out on the wench!

DORINE

I tell you he 's cut out for 't;
However great your daughter's virtue, sir,
His destiny is sure to prove the stronger.

ORGON

Have done with interrupting. Hold your tongue.
Don't poke your nose in other people's business.

DORINE *(She keeps interrupting him, just as he turns and starts to speak to his daughter.)*

If I make bold, sir, 't is for your own good.

ORGON

You 're too officious; pray you, hold your tongue.

DORINE

'T is love of you . . .

ORGON

I want none of your love.

DORINE

Then I will love you in your own despite.

ORGON

You will, eh?

DORINE

Yes, your honour 's dear to me;
I can't endure to see you made the butt
Of all men's ridicule.

ORGON

Won't you be still?

DORINE

'T would be a sin to let you make this match.

ORGON

Won't you be still, I say, you impudent viper!

DORINE

What! you are pious, and you lose your temper?

ORGON

I 'm all wrought up, with your confounded nonsense;
Now, once for all, I tell you hold your tongue.

DORINE

Then mum 's the word; I 'll take it out in thinking

ORGON

Think all you please; but not a syllable
To me about it, or . . . you understand!

(*Turning to his daughter*)

As a wise father, I 've considered all
With due deliberation.

DORINE

I 'll go mad
If I can't speak.

(*She stops the instant he turns his head.*)

ORGON

Though he 's no lady's man,
Tartuffe is well enough . . .

DORINE

A pretty phiz!

ORGON

So that, although you may not care at all
For his best qualities . . .

DORINE

A handsome dowry!

(*Orgon turns and stands in front of her, with arms folded, eyeing her*)

Were I in her place, any man should rue it
Who married me by force, that 's mighty certain;
I 'd let him know, and that within a week,
A woman's vengeance is n't far to seek.

ORGON, *to Dorine*

So—nothing that I say has any weight?

DORINE

Eh? What 's wrong now? I did n't speak to you.

ORGON

What were you doing?

DORINE

Talking to myself.

ORGON

Oh! Very well. (*Aside*) Her monstrous impudence
Must be chastised with one good slap in the face.

(*He stands ready to strike her, and, each time he speaks to his daughter, he glances toward her; but she stands still and says not a word.*)[1]

ORGON

Daughter, you must approve of my design. . . .
Think of this husband . . . I have chosen for you . . .

(*To Dorine*)

Why don't you talk to yourself?

DORINE

Nothing to say.

ORGON

One little word more.

DORINE

Oh, no, thanks. Not now.

[1] As given at the Comédie française, the action is as follows: While Orgon says, "You must approve of my design," Dorine is making signs to Mariane to resist his orders; Orgon turns around suddenly; but Dorine quickly changes her gesture and with the hand which she had lifted calmly arranges her hair and her cap. Orgon goes on, "Think of the husband . . ." and stops before the middle of his sentence to turn and catch the beginning of Dorine's gesture; but he is too quick this time, and Dorine stands looking at his furious countenance with a sweet and gentle expression. He turns and goes on, and the obstinate Dorine again lifts her hand behind his shoulder to urge Mariane to resistance: this time he catches her; but just as he swings his shoulder to give her the promised blow, she stops him by changing the intent of her gesture, and carefully picking from the top of his sleeve a bit of fluff which she holds carefully between her fingers, then blows into the air, and watches intently as it floats away. Orgon is paralysed by her innocence of expression, and compelled to hide his rage. (Régnier, *Le Tartuffe des Comédiens*).

ORGON

Sure, I 'd have caught you.

DORINE

Faith, I 'm no such fool.

ORGON

So, daughter, now obedience is the word ;
You must accept my choice with reverence.

DORINE, *running away*

You' d never catch me marrying such a creature.

ORGON, *swinging his hand at her and missing her*

Daughter, you 've such a pestilent hussy there
I can't live with her longer, without sin.
I can't discuss things in the state I 'm in.
My mind 's so flustered by her insolent talk,
To calm myself, I must go take a walk.

SCENE III

MARIANE, DORINE

DORINE

Say, have you lost the tongue from out your head?
And must I speak your rôle from A to Zed?
You let them broach a project that 's absurd,
And don't oppose it with a single word!

MARIANE

What can I do? My father is the master,

DORINE

Do? Everything, to ward off such disaster.

MARIANE

But what?

DORINE

Tell him one does n't love by proxy;
Tell him you 'll marry for yourself, not him;
Since you 're the one for whom the thing is done,
You are the one, not he, the man must please;
If his Tartuffe has charmed him so, why let him
Just marry him himself—no one will hinder.

MARIANE

A father's rights are such, it seems to me,
That I could never dare to say a word.

DORINE

Come, talk it out. Valère has asked your hand:
Now do you love him, pray, or do you not?

MARIANE

Dorine! How can you wrong my love so much,
And ask me such a question? Have I not
A hundred times laid bare my heart to you?
Do you not know how ardently I love him?

DORINE

How do I know if heart and words agree,
And if in honest truth you really love him?

MARIANE

Dorine, you wrong me greatly if you doubt it;
I 've shown my inmost feelings, all too plainly.

DORINE

So then, you love him?

MARIANE

Yes, devotedly.

DORINE

And he returns your love, apparently?

MARIANE

I think so.

DORINE

And you both alike are eager
To be well married to each other?

MARIANE

Surely.

DORINE

Then what 's your plan about this other match?

MARIANE

To kill myself, if it is forced upon me.

DORINE

Good! That 's a remedy I had n't thought of.
Just die, and everything will be all right.
This medicine is marvellous, indeed!
It drives me mad to hear folk talk such nonsense.

MARIANE

Oh dear, Dorine, you get in such a temper!
You have no sympathy for people's troubles.

DORINE

I have no sympathy when folk talk nonsense,
And flatten out as you do, at a pinch.

MARIANE

But what can you expect?—if one is timid?—

DORINE

But what is love worth, if it has no courage?

MARIANE

Am I not constant in my love for him?
Is 't not his place to win me from my father?

DORINE

But if your father is a crazy fool,
And quite bewitched with his Tartuffe? And breaks
His bounden word? Is that your lover's fault?

MARIANE

But shall I publicly refuse and scorn
This match, and make it plain that I 'm in love?
Shall I cast off for him, whate'er he be,
Womanly modesty and filial duty?
You ask me to display my love in public . . . ?

DORINE

No, no, I ask you nothing. You shall be
Mister Tartuffe's; why, now I think of it,
I should be wrong to turn you from this marriage.
What cause can I have to oppose your wishes?
So fine a match! An excellent good match!
Mister Tartuffe! Oh ho! No mean proposal!
Mister Tartuffe, sure, take it all in all,

Is not a man to sneeze at—oh, by no means!
'T is no small luck to be his happy spouse.
The whole world joins to sing his praise already;
He 's noble—in his parish; handsome too;
Red ears, and high complexion—oh, my lud!
You 'll be too happy, sure, with him for husband.

MARIANE

Oh dear! . . .

DORINE

What joy and pride will fill your heart
To be the bride of such a handsome fellow!

MARIANE

Oh, stop, I beg you; try to find some way
To help break off the match. I quite give in,
I 'm ready to do anything you say.

DORINE

No, no, a daughter must obey her father,
Though he should want to make her wed a monkey.
Besides, your fate is fine. What could be better!
You 'll take the stage-coach to his little village,
And find it full of uncles and of cousins,
Whose conversation will delight you. Then
You 'll be presented in their best society.
You 'll even go to call, by way of welcome,
On Mrs. Bailiff, Mrs. Tax-Collector,
Who 'll patronise you with a folding-stool.
There, once a year, at carnival, you 'll have—
Perhaps—a ball; with orchestra—two bag-pipes;
And sometimes a trained ape, and Punch and Judy;
Though if your husband . . .

MARIANE

Oh, you 'll kill me. Please
Contrive to help me out with your advice.

DORINE

I thank you kindly.

MARIANE

Oh! Dorine, I beg you . . .

DORINE

To serve you right, this marriage must go through.

MARIANE

Dear girl!

DORINE

No.

MARIANE

If I say I love Valère . . .

DORINE

No, no. Tartuffe 's your man, and you shall taste him.

MARIANE

You know I 've always trusted you; now help me . . .

DORINE

No, you shall be, my faith! Tartuffified.

MARIANE

Well then, since you 've no pity for my fate
Let me take counsel only of despair;

It will advise and help and give me courage;
There 's one sure cure, I know, for all my troubles.

(*She starts to go.*)

DORINE

There, there! Come back. I can't be angry long.
I must take pity on you, after all.

MARIANE

Oh, don't you see, Dorine, if I must bear
This martyrdom, I certainly shall die.

DORINE

Now don't you fret. We 'll surely find some way
To hinder this . . . But here 's Valère, your lover.

SCENE IV

VALERE, MARIANE, DORINE

VALERE

Madam, a piece of news—quite new to me—
Has just come out, and very fine it is.

MARIANE

What piece of news?

VALERE

Your marriage with Tartuffe.

MARIANE

'T is true my father has this plan in mind.

VALERE

Your father, madam . . .

MARIANE

Yes, he 's changed his plans,
And did but now propose it to me.

VALERE

What!
Seriously?

MARIANE

Yes, he was serious,
And openly insisted on the match.

VALERE

And what 's your resolution in the matter,
Madam?

MARIANE

I don't know.

VALERE

That 's a pretty answer.
You don't know?

MARIANE

No.

VALERE

No?

MARIANE

What do you advise?

VALERE

I? My advice is, marry him, by all means.

MARIANE

That 's your advice?

VALERE

Yes.

MARIANE

Do you mean it?

VALERE

Surely.
A splendid choice, and worthy your acceptance.

MARIANE

Oh, very well, sir! I shall take your counsel.

VALERE

You 'll find no trouble taking it, I warrant.

MARIANE

No more than you did giving it, be sure.

VALERE

I gave it, truly, to oblige you, madam.

MARIANE

And I shall take it to oblige you, sir.

DORINE, *withdrawing to the back of the stage*

Let 's see what this affair will come to.

VALERE

So.
That is your love? And it was all deceit
When you . . .

MARIANE

I beg you, say no more of that.
You told me, squarely, sir, I should accept
The husband that is offered me; and I
Will tell you squarely that I mean to do so,
Since you have given me this good advice.

VALERE

Don't shield yourself with talk of my advice.
You had your mind made up, that 's evident;
And now you 're snatching at a trifling pretext
To justify the breaking of your word.

MARIANE

Exactly so.

VALERE

Of course it is; your heart
Has never known true love for me.

MARIANE

Alas!
You 're free to think so, if you please.

VALERE

Yes, yes,
I 'm free to think so; and my outraged love
May yet forestall you in your perfidy,
And offer elsewhere both my heart and hand.

MARIANE

No doubt of it; the love your high deserts
May win . . .

VALERE

Good Lord, have done with my deserts!
I know I have but few, and you have proved it.
But I may find more kindness in another;
I know of someone, who 'll not be ashamed
To take your leavings, and make up my loss.

MARIANE

The loss is not so great; you 'll easily
Console yourself completely for this change.

VALERE

I 'll try my best, that you may well believe.
When we 're forgotten by a woman's heart,
Our pride is challenged; we, too, must forget;
Or if we cannot, must at least pretend to.
No other way can man such baseness prove,
As be a lover scorned, and still in love.

MARIANE

In faith, a high and noble sentiment.

VALERE

Yes; and it 's one that all men must approve.
What! Would you have me keep my love alive,
And see you fly into another's arms
Before my very eyes; and never offer
To someone else the heart that you had scorned?

MARIANE

Oh no indeed! For my part, I could wish
That it were done already.

VALERE

What! You wish it?

MARIANE

Yes.

VALERE

This is insult heaped on injury;
I 'll go at once and do as you desire.

(*He takes a step or two as if to go away.*)

MARIANE

Oh, very well then.

VALERE, *turning back*

But remember this:
'T was you that drove me to this desperate pass.

MARIANE

Of course.

VALERE, *turning back again*

And in the plan that I have formed
I only follow your example.

MARIANE

Yes.

VALERE, *at the door*

Enough; you shall be punctually obeyed.

MARIANE

So much the better.

VALERE, *coming back again*
This is once for all.

MARIANE
So be it, then.

VALERE (*He goes toward the door, but just as he reaches it, turns around.*)
Eh?

MARIANE
What?

VALERE
You did n't call me?

MARIANE
I? You are dreaming.

VALERE
Very well, I 'm gone.
Madam, farewell.
(*He walks slowly away.*)

MARIANE
Farewell, sir.

DORINE
I must say
You 've lost your senses and both gone clean daft!
I 've let you fight it out to the end o' the chapter
To see how far the thing could go. Oho, there,
Mister Valère!
(*She goes and seizes him by the arm, to stop him. He makes a great show of resistance.*)

VALERE

What do you want, Dorine?

DORINE

Come here.

VALERE

No, no, I 'm quite beside myself.
Don't hinder me from doing as she wishes.

DORINE

Stop!

VALERE

No. You see, I 'm fixed, resolved, determined.

DORINE

So!

MARIANE, *aside*

Since my presence pains him, makes him go,
I 'd better go myself, and leave him free.

DORINE, *leaving Valère, and running after Mariane*

Now t' other! Where are you going?

MARIANE

Let me be.

DORINE

Come back.

MARIANE

No, no, it is n't any use.

VALERE, *aside*

'T is clear the sight of me is torture to her;
No doubt, 't were better I should free her from it.

DORINE, *leaving Mariane, and running after Valère*

Same thing again! Deuce take you both, I say.
Now stop your fooling; come here, you; and you.
(*She pulls first one, then the other, toward the middle of the stage.*)

VALERE, *to Dorine*

What 's your idea?

MARIANE, *to Dorine*

What can you mean to do?

DORINE

Set you to rights, and pull you out o' the scrape.

(*To Valère*)

Are you quite mad, to quarrel with her now?

VALERE

Did n't you hear the things she said to me?

DORINE, *to Mariane*

Are you quite mad, to get in such a passion?

MARIANE

Did n't you see the way he treated me?

DORINE

Fools, both of you.

(*To Valère*)

She thinks of nothing else
But to keep faith with you, I vouch for it.

(*To Mariane*)

And he loves none but you, and longs for nothing
But just to marry you, I stake my life on 't.

MARIANE, *to Valère*

Why did you give me such advice then, pray?

VALERE, *to Mariane*

Why ask for my advice on such a matter?

DORINE

You both are daft, I tell you. Here, your hands.

(*To Valère*)

Come, yours.

VALERE, *giving Dorine his hand*

What for?

DORINE, *to Mariane*

Now, yours.

MARIANE, *giving Dorine her hand*

But what 's the use?

DORINE

Oh, quick now, come along. There, both of you—
You love each other better than you think.

(*Valère and Mariane hold each other's hands some time without looking at each other.*)

VALERE, *at last turning toward Mariane*

Come, don't be so ungracious now about it;
Look at a man as if you did n't hate him.
(*Mariane looks sideways toward Valère, with just a bit of a smile.*)

DORINE

My faith and troth, what fools these lovers be!

VALERE, *to Mariane*

But come now, have I not a just complaint?
And truly, are you not a wicked creature
To take delight in saying what would pain me?

MARIANE

And are you not yourself the most ungrateful . . . ?

DORINE

Leave this discussion till another time;
Now, think how you 'll stave off this plaguey marriage.

MARIANE

Then tell us how to go about it.

DORINE

Well,
We 'll try all sorts of ways.
(*To Mariane*)
Your father 's daft;
(*To Valère*)
This plan is nonsense.

(*To Mariane*)

You had better humour
His notions by a semblance of consent,
So that in case of danger, you can still
Find means to block the marriage by delay.
If you gain time, the rest is easy, trust me.
One day you 'll fool them with a sudden illness,
Causing delay; another day, ill omens:
You 've met a funeral, or broke a mirror,
Or dreamed of muddy water. Best of all,
They cannot marry you to anyone
Without your saying yes. But now, methinks,
They must n't find you chattering together.

(*To Valère*)

You, go at once and set your friends at work
To make him keep his word to you; while we
Will bring the brother's influence to bear,
And get the step-mother on our side, too.
Good-bye.

VALERE, *to Mariane*

Whatever efforts we may make,
My greatest hope, be sure, must rest on you.

MARIANE, *to Valère*

I cannot answer for my father's whims;
But no one save Valère shall ever have me.

VALERE

You thrill me through with joy! Whatever comes . . .

DORINE

Oho! These lovers! Never done with prattling!
Now go.

VALERE, *starting to go, and coming back again*

One last word . . .

DORINE

What a gabble and pother!
Be off! By this door, you. And you, by t 'other.
(*She pushes them off, by the shoulders, in opposite directions.*)

ACT III

SCENE I

DAMIS, DORINE

DAMIS

May lightning strike me dead this very instant,
May I be everywhere proclaimed a scoundrel,
If any reverence or power shall stop me,
And if I don't do straightway something desperate!

DORINE

I beg you, moderate this towering passion;
Your father did but merely mention it.
Not all things that are talked of turn to facts;
The road is long, sometimes, from plans to acts.

DAMIS

No, I must end this paltry fellow's plots,
And he shall hear from me a truth or two.

DORINE

So ho! Go slow now. Just you leave the fellow—
Your father too—in your step-mother's hands.
She has some influence with this Tartuffe,
He makes a point of heeding all she says,
And I suspect that he is fond of her.

Would God 't were true!—'T would be the height
of humour.
Now, she has sent for him, in your behalf,
To sound him on this marriage, to find out
What his ideas are, and to show him plainly
What troubles he may cause, if he persists
In giving countenance to this design.
His man says, he 's at prayers, I must n't see him,
But likewise says, he 'll presently be down.
So off with you, and let me wait for him.

DAMIS

I may be present at this interview.

DORINE

No, no! They must be left alone.

DAMIS

I won't
So much as speak to him.

DORINE

Go on! We know you
And your high tantrums. Just the way to spoil
things!
Be off.

DAMIS

No, I must see—I 'll keep my temper.

DORINE

Out on you, what a plague! He 's coming. Hide!
(*Damis goes and hides in the closet at the back of the stage.*)

SCENE II

TARTUFFE, DORINE

TARTUFFE, *speaking to his valet, off the stage, as soon as he sees Dorine is there*

Lawrence, put up my hair-cloth shirt and scourge,
And pray that Heaven may shed its light upon you.
If any come to see me, say I 'm gone
To share my alms among the prisoners.

DORINE, *aside*

What affectation and what showing off!

TARTUFFE

What do you want with me?

DORINE

To tell you . . .

TARTUFFE, *taking a handkerchief from his pocket*

Ah!
Before you speak, pray take this handkerchief.

DORINE

What?

TARTUFFE

Cover up that bosom, which I can't
Endure to look on. Things like that offend
Our souls, and fill our minds with sinful thoughts.

DORINE

Are you so tender to temptation, then,
And has the flesh such power upon your senses?
I don't know how you get in such a heat;

For my part, I am not so prone to lust,
And I could see you stripped from head to foot,
And all your hide not tempt me in the least.

TARTUFFE

Show in your speech some little modesty,
Or I must instantly take leave of you.

DORINE

No, no, I 'll leave you to yourself; I 've only
One thing to say: Madam will soon be down,
And begs the favour of a word with you.

TARTUFFE

Ah! Willingly.

DORINE, *aside*

How gentle all at once!
My faith, I still believe I 've hit upon it.

TARTUFFE

Will she come soon?

DORINE

I think I hear her now.
Yes, here she is herself; I 'll leave you with her.

SCENE III

ELMIRE, TARTUFFE

TARTUFFE

May Heaven's overflowing kindness ever
Give you good health of body and of soul,
And bless your days according to the wishes
And prayers of its most humble votary!

ELMIRE

I 'm very grateful for your pious wishes.
But let 's sit down, so we may talk at ease.

TARTUFFE, *after sitting down*

And how are you recovered from your illness?

ELMIRE, *sitting down also*

Quite well; the fever soon let go its hold.

TARTUFFE

My prayers, I fear, have not sufficient merit
To have drawn down this favour from on high;
But each entreaty that I made to Heaven
Had for its object your recovery.

ELMIRE

You 're too solicitous on my behalf.

TARTUFFE

We could not cherish your dear health too much;
I would have given mine, to help restore it.

ELMIRE

That 's pushing Christian charity too far;
I owe you many thanks for so much kindness.

TARTUFFE

I do far less for you than you deserve.

ELMIRE

There is a matter that I wished to speak of
In private; I am glad there 's no one here
To listen.

TARTUFFE

Madam, I am overjoyed.
'T is sweet to find myself alone with you.
This is an opportunity I 've asked
Of Heaven, many a time; till now, in vain.

ELMIRE

All that I wish, is just a word from you,
Quite frank and open, hiding nothing from me.
(*Damis, without their seeing him, opens the closet door half way.*)

TARTUFFE

I too could wish, as Heaven's especial favour,
To lay my soul quite open to your eyes,
And swear to you, the trouble that I made
About those visits which your charms attract,
Does not result from any hatred toward you,
But rather from a passionate devotion,
And purest motives . . .

ELMIRE

That is how I take it,
I think 't is my salvation that concerns you.

TARTUFFE, *pressing her finger tips*

Madam, 't is so; and such is my devotion . . .

ELMIRE

Ouch! but you squeeze too hard.

TARTUFFE

Excess of zeal.
In no way could I ever mean to hurt you,
And I 'd as soon . . .
(*He puts his hand on her knee.*)

ELMIRE

What 's your hand doing there?

TARTUFFE

Feeling your gown; the stuff is very soft.

ELMIRE

Let be, I beg you; I am very ticklish.

(*She moves her chair away, and Tartuffe brings his nearer.*)

TARTUFFE, *handling the lace yoke of Elmire's dress*

Dear me, how wonderful in workmanship
This lace is! They do marvels, nowadays;
Things of all kinds were never better made.

ELMIRE

Yes, very true. But let us come to business.
They say my husband means to break his word,
And marry Mariane to you. Is 't so?

TARTUFFE

He did hint some such thing; but truly, madam,
That 's not the happiness I 'm yearning after;
I see elsewhere the sweet compelling charms
Of such a joy as fills my every wish.

ELMIRE

You mean you cannot love terrestrial things.

TARTUFFE

The heart within my bosom is not stone.

ELMIRE

I well believe your sighs all tend to Heaven,
And nothing here below can stay your thoughts.

TARTUFFE

Love for the beauty of eternal things
Cannot destroy our love for earthly beauty;
Our mortal senses well may be entranced
By perfect works that Heaven has fashioned here.
Its charms reflected shine in such as you,
And in yourself, its rarest miracles;
It has displayed such marvels in your face,
That eyes are dazed, and hearts are rapt away;
I could not look on you, the perfect creature,
Without admiring Nature's great Creator,
And feeling all my heart inflamed with love
For you, His fairest image of Himself.
At first I trembled lest this secret love
Might be the Evil Spirit's artful snare;
I even schooled my heart to flee your beauty,
Thinking it was a bar to my salvation.
But soon, enlightened, O all lovely one,
I saw how this my passion may be blameless,
How I may make it fit with modesty,
And thus completely yield my heart to it.
'T is, I must own, a great presumption in me
To dare make you the offer of my heart;
My love hopes all things from your perfect goodness,
And nothing from my own poor weak endeavour.
You are my hope, my stay, my peace of heart;
On you depends my torment or my bliss;
And by your doom of judgment, I shall be
Blest, if you will; or damned, by your decree.

ELMIRE

Your declaration 's turned most gallantly ;
But truly, it is just a bit surprising.
You should have better armed your heart, methinks,
And taken thought somewhat on such a matter.
A pious man like you, known everywhere . . .

TARTUFFE

Though pious, I am none the less a man ;
And when a man beholds your heavenly charms,
The heart surrenders, and can think no more.
I know such words seem strange, coming from me ;
But, madam, I 'm no angel, after all ;
If you condemn my frankly made avowal
You only have your charming self to blame.
Soon as I saw your more than human beauty,
You were thenceforth the sovereign of my soul ;
Sweetness ineffable was in your eyes,
That took by storm my still resisting heart,
And conquered everything, fasts, prayers, and tears,
And turned my worship wholly to yourself.
My looks, my sighs, have spoke a thousand times ;
Now, to express it all, my voice must speak.
If but you will look down with gracious favour
Upon the sorrows of your worthless slave,
If in your goodness you will give me comfort
And condescend unto my nothingness,
I 'll ever pay you, O sweet miracle,
An unexampled worship and devotion.
Then too, with me your honour runs no risk ;
With me you need not fear a public scandal.
These court gallants, that women are so fond of,
Are boastful of their acts, and vain in speech ;

They always brag in public of their progress;
Soon as a favour 's granted, they 'll divulge it;
Their tattling tongues, if you but trust to them,
Will foul the altar where their hearts have worshipped.
But men like me are so discreet in love,
That you may trust their lasting secrecy.
The care we take to guard our own good name
May fully guarantee the one we love;
So you may find, with hearts like ours sincere,
Love without scandal, pleasure without fear.

ELMIRE

I 've heard you through—your speech is clear, at least.
But don't you fear that I may take a fancy
To tell my husband of your gallant passion,
And that a prompt report of this affair
May somewhat change the friendship which he bears you?

TARTUFFE

I know that you 're too good and generous,
That you will pardon my temerity,
Excuse, upon the score of human frailty,
The violence of passion that offends you,
And not forget, when you consult your mirror,
That I 'm not blind, and man is made of flesh.

ELMIRE

Some women might do otherwise, perhaps,
But I am willing to employ discretion,
And not repeat the matter to my husband;
But in return, I 'll ask one thing of you:

That you urge forward, frankly and sincerely,
The marriage of Valère to Mariane;
That you give up the unjust influence
By which you hope to win another's rights;
And . . .

SCENE IV

ELMIRE, DAMIS, TARTUFFE

DAMIS, *coming out of the closet-room where he had been hiding*

No, I say! This thing must be made public.
I was just there, and overheard it all;
And Heaven's goodness must have brought me there
On purpose to confound this scoundrel's pride
And grant me means to take a signal vengeance
On his hypocrisy and arrogance,
And undeceive my father, showing up
The rascal caught at making love to you.

ELMIRE

No, no; it is enough if he reforms,
Endeavouring to deserve the favour shown him.
And since I 've promised, do not you belie me.
'T is not my way to make a public scandal;
An honest wife will scorn to heed such follies,
And never fret her husband's ears with them.

DAMIS

You 've reasons of your own for acting thus;
And I have mine for doing otherwise.
To spare him now would be a mockery;
His bigot's pride has triumphed all too long

Over my righteous anger, and has caused
Far too much trouble in our family.
The rascal all too long has ruled my father,
And crossed my sister's love, and mine as well.
The traitor now must be unmasked before him;
And Providence has given me means to do it.
To Heaven I owe the opportunity,
And if I did not use it now I have it,
I should deserve to lose it once for all.

ELMIRE

Damis . . .

DAMIS

No, by your leave; I 'll not be counselled.
I 'm overjoyed. You need n't try to tell me
I must give up the pleasure of revenge.
I 'll make an end of this affair at once;
And, to content me, here 's my father now.

SCENE V

ORGON, ELMIRE, DAMIS, TARTUFFE

DAMIS

Father, we 've news to welcome your arrival,
That 's altogether novel, and surprising.
You are well paid for your caressing care,
And this fine gentleman rewards your love
Most handsomely, with zeal that seeks no less
Than your dishonour, as has now been proven.
I 've just surprised him making to your wife
The shameful offer of a guilty love.
She, somewhat over gentle and discreet,

Insisted that the thing should be concealed;
But I will not condone such shamelessness,
Nor so far wrong you as to keep it secret.

ELMIRE

Yes, I believe a wife should never trouble
Her husband's peace of mind with such vain gossip;
A woman's honour does not hang on telling;
It is enough if she defend herself;
Or so I think; Damis, you 'd not have spoken,
If you would but have heeded my advice.

SCENE VI

ORGON, DAMIS, TARTUFFE

ORGON

Just Heaven! Can what I hear be credited?

TARTUFFE

Yes, brother, I am wicked, I am guilty,
A miserable sinner, steeped in evil,
The greatest criminal that ever lived.
Each moment of my life is stained with soilures;
And all is but a mass of crime and filth;
Heaven, for my punishment, I see it plainly,
Would mortify me now. Whatever wrong
They find to charge me with, I 'll not deny it
But guard against the pride of self-defence.
Believe their stories, arm your wrath against me,
And drive me like a villain from your house;
I cannot have so great a share of shame
But what I have deserved a greater still.

ORGON, *to his son*

You miscreant, can you dare, with such a falsehood,
To try to stain the whiteness of his virtue?

DAMIS

What! The feigned meekness of this hypocrite
Makes you discredit . . .

ORGON

Silence, cursèd plague!

TARTUFFE

Ah! Let him speak; you chide him wrongfully;
You 'd do far better to believe his tales.
Why favour me so much in such a matter?
How can you know of what I 'm capable?
And should you trust my outward semblance, brother,
Or judge therefrom that I 'm the better man?
No, no; you let appearances deceive you;
I 'm anything but what I 'm thought to be,
Alas! and though all men believe me godly,
The simple truth is, I 'm a worthless creature.

(*To Damis*)

Yes, my dear son, say on, and call me traitor,
Abandoned scoundrel, thief, and murderer;
Heap on me names yet more detestable,
And I shall not gainsay you; I 've deserved them;
I 'll bear this ignominy on my knees,
To expiate in shame the crimes I 've done.

ORGON, *to Tartuffe*

Ah, brother, 't is too much!

(*To his son*)

You 'll not relent,
You blackguard?

DAMIS

What! His talk can so deceive you . . .

ORGON

Silence, you scoundrel!

(*To Tartuffe*)

Brother, rise, I beg you.

(*To his son*)

Infamous villain!

DAMIS

Can he . . .

ORGON

Silence!

DAMIS

What . . .

ORGON

Another word, I 'll break your every bone.

TARTUFFE

Brother, in God's name, don't be angry with him!
I 'd rather bear myself the bitterest torture
Than have him get a scratch on my account.

ORGON, *to his son*

Ungrateful monster!

TARTUFFE

Stop. Upon my knees
I beg you pardon him . . .

ORGON, *throwing himself on his knees too, and embracing Tartuffe*

Alas! How can you?

(*To his son*)

Villain! Behold his goodness!

DAMIS

So . . .

ORGON

Be still,

DAMIS

What! I . . .

ORGON

Be still, I say. I know your motives
For this attack. You hate him, all of you;
Wife, children, servants, all let loose upon him,
You have recourse to every shameful trick
To drive this godly man out of my house;
The more you strive to rid yourselves of him,
The more I 'll strive to make him stay with me;
I 'll have him straightway married to my daughter,
Just to confound the pride of all of you.

DAMIS

What! Will you force her to accept his hand?

ORGON

Yes, and this very evening, to enrage you,
Young rascal! Ah! I'll brave you all, and show you
That I 'm the master, and must be obeyed.
Now, down upon your knees this instant, rogue,
And take back what you said, and ask his pardon.

DAMIS

Who? I? Ask pardon of that cheating scoundrel . . .?

ORGON

Do you resist, you beggar, and insult him?
A cudgel, here! a cudgel!

(*To Tartuffe*)

Don't restrain me.

(*To his son*)

Off with you! Leave my house this instant, sirrah,
And never dare set foot in it again.

DAMIS

Yes, I will leave your house, but . . .

ORGON

Leave it quickly.

You reprobate, I disinherit you,
And give you, too, my curse into the bargain.

SCENE VII

ORGON, TARTUFFE

ORGON

What! So insult a saintly man of God!

TARTUFFE

Heaven, forgive him all the pain he gives me![1]

(*To Orgon*)

Could you but know with what distress I see
Them try to vilify me to my brother!

ORGON

Ah!

TARTUFFE

The mere thought of such ingratitude
Makes my soul suffer torture, bitterly . . .
My horror at it . . . Ah! my heart's so full
I cannot speak . . . I think I 'll die of it.

ORGON, *in tears, running to the door through which he drove away his son*

Scoundrel! I wish I 'd never let you go,
But slain you on the spot with my own hand.

[1] Some modern editions have adopted the reading, preserved by tradition as that of the earliest stage version:

Heaven, forgive him even as I forgive him!

Voltaire gives still another reading:

Heaven, forgive me even as I forgive him!

Whichever was the original version, it appears in none of the early editions, and Molière probably felt forced to change it on account of its too close resemblance to the Biblical phrase.

(*To Tartuffe*)

Brother, compose yourself, and don't be angry.

TARTUFFE

Nay, brother, let us end these painful quarrels.
I see what troublous times I bring upon you,
And think 't is needful that I leave this house.

ORGON

What! You can't mean it?

TARTUFFE

Yes, they hate me here,
And try, I find, to make you doubt my faith.

ORGON

What of it? Do you find I listen to them?

TARTUFFE

No doubt they won't stop there. These same reports
You now reject, may some day win a hearing.

ORGON

No, brother, never.

TARTUFFE

Ah! my friend, a woman
May easily mislead her husband's mind.

ORGON

No, no.

TARTUFFE

So let me quickly go away
And thus remove all cause for such attacks.

ORGON

No, you shall stay; my life depends upon it.

TARTUFFE

Then I must mortify myself. And yet,
If you should wish . . .

ORGON

No, never!

TARTUFFE

Very well then;
No more of that. But I shall rule my conduct
To fit the case. Honour is delicate,
And friendship binds me to forestall suspicion,
Prevent all scandal, and avoid your wife.

ORGON

No, you shall haunt her, just to spite them all.
'T is my delight to set them in a rage;
You shall be seen together at all hours;
And what is more, the better to defy them,
I 'll have no other heir but you; and straightway
I 'll go and make a deed of gift to you,
Drawn in due form, of all my property.
A good true friend, my son-in-law to be,
Is more to me than son, and wife, and kindred.
You will accept my offer, will you not?

TARTUFFE

Heaven's will be done in everything!

ORGON

Poor man!
We 'll go make haste to draw the deed aright,
And then let envy burst itself with spite!

ACT IV

SCENE I

CLEANTE, TARTUFFE

CLEANTE

Yes, it 's become the talk of all the town,
And made a stir that 's scarcely to your credit ;
And I have met you, sir, most opportunely,
To tell you in a word my frank opinion.
Not to sift out this scandal to the bottom,
Suppose the worst for us—suppose Damis
Acted the traitor, and accused you falsely ;
Should not a Christian pardon this offence,
And stifle in his heart all wish for vengeance ?
Should you permit that, for your petty quarrel,
A son be driven from his father's house ?
I tell you yet again, and tell you frankly,
Everyone, high or low, is scandalised ;
If you 'll take my advice, you 'll make it up,
And not push matters to extremities.
Make sacrifice to God of your resentment ;
Restore the son to favour with his father.

TARTUFFE

Alas! So far as I 'm concerned, how gladly
Would I do so! I bear him no ill will ;
I pardon all, lay nothing to his charge,

And wish with all my heart that I might serve him;
But Heaven's interests cannot allow it;
If he returns, then I must leave the house.
After his conduct, quite unparalleled,
All intercourse between us would bring scandal;
God knows what everyone's first thought would be!
They would attribute it to merest scheming
On my part—say that conscious of my guilt
I feigned a Christian love for my accuser,
But feared him in my heart, and hoped to win him
And underhandedly secure his silence.

CLEANTE

You try to put us off with specious phrases;
But all your arguments are too far-fetched.
Why take upon yourself the cause of Heaven?
Does Heaven need our help to punish sinners?
Leave to itself the care of its own vengeance,
And keep in mind the pardon it commands us;
Besides, think somewhat less of men's opinions,
When you are following the will of Heaven.
Shall petty fear of what the world may think
Prevent the doing of a noble deed?
No!—let us always do as Heaven commands,
And not perplex our brains with further questions.

TARTUFFE

Already I have told you I forgive him;
And that is doing, sir, as Heaven commands.
But after this day's scandal and affront
Heaven does not order me to live with him.

CLEANTE

And does it order you to lend your ear

To what mere whim suggested to his father,
And to accept the gift of his estates,
On which, in justice, you can make no claim?

TARTUFFE

No one who knows me, sir, can have the thought
That I am acting from a selfish motive.
The goods of this world have no charms for me;
I am not dazzled by their treacherous glamour;
And if I bring myself to take the gift
Which he insists on giving me, I do so,
To tell the truth, only because I fear
This whole estate may fall into bad hands,
And those to whom it comes may use it ill
And not employ it, as is my design,
For Heaven's glory and my neighbours' good.

CLEANTE

Eh, sir, give up these conscientious scruples
That well may cause a rightful heir's complaints.
Don't take so much upon yourself, but let him
Possess what 's his, at his own risk and peril;
Consider, it were better he misused it,
Than you should be accused of robbing him.
I am astounded that unblushingly
You could allow such offers to be made!
Tell me—has true religion any maxim
That teaches us to rob the lawful heir?
If Heaven has made it quite impossible
Damis and you should live together here,
Were it not better you should quietly
And honourably withdraw, than let the son
Be driven out for your sake, dead against

All reason? 'T would be giving, sir, believe me
Such an example of your probity . . .

TARTUFFE

Sir, it is half-past three; certain devotions
Recall me to my closet; you 'll forgive me
For leaving you so soon.

CLEANTE, *alone*

Ah!

SCENE II

ELMIRE, MARIANE, CLEANTE, DORINE

DORINE, *to Cleante*

Sir, we beg you
To help us all you can in her behalf;
She 's suffering almost more than heart can bear;
This match her father means to make to-night
Drives her each moment to despair. He 's coming.
Let us unite our efforts now, we beg you,
And try by strength or skill to change his purpose.

SCENE III

ORGON, ELMIRE, MARIANE, CLEANTE, DORINE

ORGON

So ho! I 'm glad to find you all together.

(*To Mariane*)

Here is the contract that shall make you happy,
My dear. You know already what it means.

MARIANE, *on her knees before Orgon*

Father, I beg you, in the name of Heaven
That knows my grief, and by whate'er can move you,
Relax a little your paternal rights,
And free my love from this obedience!
Oh, do not make me, by your harsh command,
Complain to Heaven you ever were my father;
Do not make wretched this poor life you gave me.
If, crossing that fond hope which I had formed,
You 'll not permit me to belong to one
Whom I have dared to love, at least, I beg you
Upon my knees, oh, save me from the torment
Of being possessed by one whom I abhor!
And do not drive me to some desperate act
By exercising all your rights upon me.

ORGON, *a little touched*

Come, come, my heart, be firm! no human weakness!

MARIANE

I am not jealous of your love for him;
Display it freely; give him your estate,
And if that 's not enough, add all of mine;
I willingly agree, and give it up,
If only you 'll not give him me, your daughter;
Oh, rather let a convent's rigid rule
Wear out the wretched days that Heaven allots me.

ORGON

These girls are ninnies!—always turning nuns
When fathers thwart their silly love-affairs.
Get on your feet! The more you hate to have him,
The more 't will help you earn your soul's salvation.

So, mortify your senses by this marriage,
And don't vex me about it any more.

DORINE

But what . . . ?

ORGON

You, hold your tongue, before your betters.
Don't dare to say a single word, I tell you.

CLEANTE

If you will let me answer, and advise . . .

ORGON

Brother, I value your advice most highly;
'T is well thought out; no better can be had;
But you 'll allow me—not to follow it.

ELMIRE, *to her husband*

I can't find words to cope with such a case;
Your blindness makes me quite astounded at you.
You are bewitched with him, to disbelieve
The things we tell you happened here to-day.

ORGON

I am your humble servant, and can see
Things, when they 're plain as noses on folks' faces.
I know you 're partial to my rascal son,
And did n't dare to disavow the trick
He tried to play on this poor man; besides,
You were too calm, to be believed; if that
Had happened, you'd have been far more disturbed.

ELMIRE

And must our honour always rush to arms
At the mere mention of illicit love?

Or can we answer no attack upon it
Except with blazing eyes and lips of scorn?
For my part, I just laugh away such nonsense;
I 've no desire to make a loud to-do.
Our virtue should, I think, be gentle-natured;
Nor can I quite approve those savage prudes
Whose honour arms itself with teeth and claws
To tear men's eyes out at the slightest word.
Heaven preserve me from that kind of honour!
I like my virtue not to be a vixen,
And I believe a quiet cold rebuff
No less effective to repulse a lover.

ORGON

I know . . . and you can't throw me off the scent.

ELMIRE

Once more, I am astounded at your weakness;
I wonder what your unbelief would answer,
If I should let you see we 've told the truth?

ORGON

See it?

ELMIRE

Yes.

ORGON

Nonsense.

ELMIRE

Come! If I should find
A way to make you see it clear as day?

ORGON

All rubbish.

ELMIRE

What a man! But answer me.
I 'm not proposing now that you believe us;
But let 's suppose that here, from proper hiding,
You should be made to see and hear all plainly;
What would you say then, to your man of virtue?

ORGON

Why, then, I 'd say . . . say nothing. It can't be.

ELMIRE

Your error has endured too long already,
And quite too long you 've branded me a liar.
I must at once, for my own satisfaction,
Make you a witness of the things we 've told you.

ORGON

Amen! I take you at your word. We 'll see
What tricks you have, and how you 'll keep your promise.

ELMIRE, *to Dorine*

Send him to me.

DORINE, *to Elmire*

The man 's a crafty codger;
Perhaps you 'll find it difficult to catch him.

ELMIRE, *to Dorine*

Oh no! A lover 's never hard to cheat,
And self-conceit leads straight to self-deceit.
Bid him come down to me.

(*To Cléante and Mariane*)

And you, withdraw.

SCENE IV

ELMIRE, ORGON

ELMIRE

Bring up this table, and get under it.

ORGON

What?

ELMIRE

One essential is to hide you well.

ORGON

Why under there?

ELMIRE

Oh dear! Do as I say;
I know what I 'm about, as you shall see.
Get under, now, I tell you; and once there
Be careful no one either sees or hears you.

ORGON

I 'm going a long way to humour you,
I must say; but I 'll see you through your scheme.

ELMIRE

And then you 'll have, I think, no more to say.

(*To her husband, who is now under the table.*)

But mind, I 'm going to meddle with strange matters;
Prepare yourself to be in no wise shocked.
Whatever I may say must pass, because
'T is only to convince you, as I promised.
By wheedling speeches, since I 'm forced to do it,
I 'll make this hypocrite put off his mask,

Flatter the longings of his shameless passion,
And give free play to all his impudence.
But, since 't is for your sake, to prove to you
His guilt, that I shall feign to share his love,
I can leave off as soon as you 're convinced,
And things shall go no farther than you choose.
So, when you think they 've gone quite far enough,
It is for you to stop his mad pursuit,
To spare your wife, and not expose me farther
Than you shall need, yourself, to undeceive you.
It is your own affair, and you must end it
When . . . Here he comes. Keep still, don't show
yourself.

SCENE V

TARTUFFE, ELMIRE; ORGON, *under the table*

TARTUFFE

They told me that you wished to see me here.

ELMIRE

Yes. I have secrets for your ear alone.
But shut the door first, and look everywhere
For fear of spies.

(*Tartuffe goes and closes the door, and comes back.*)

We surely can't afford
Another scene like that we had just now;
Was ever anyone so caught before!
Damis did frighten me most terribly
On your account; you saw I did my best
To baffle his design, and calm his anger.
But I was so confused, I never thought

To contradict his story; still, thank Heaven,
Things turned out all the better, as it happened,
And now we 're on an even safer footing.
The high esteem you 're held in, laid the storm;
My husband can have no suspicion of you,
And even insists, to spite the scandal-mongers,
That we shall be together constantly;
So that is how, without the risk of blame,
I can be here locked up with you alone,
And can reveal to you my heart, perhaps
Only too ready to allow your passion.

TARTUFFE

Your words are somewhat hard to understand,
Madam; just now you used a different style.

ELMIRE

If that refusal has offended you,
How little do you know a woman's heart!
How ill you guess what it would have you know,
When it presents so feeble a defence!
Always, at first, our modesty resists
The tender feelings you inspire us with.
Whatever cause we find to justify
The love that masters us, we still must feel
Some little shame in owning it; and strive
To make as though we would not, when we would.
But from the very way we go about it
We let a lover know our heart surrenders,
The while our lips, for honour's sake, oppose
Our heart's desire, and in refusing promise.
I 'm telling you my secret all too freely
And with too little heed to modesty.

But—now that I 've made bold to speak—pray tell me,
Should I have tried to keep Damis from speaking,
Should I have heard the offer of your heart
So quietly, and suffered all your pleading,
And taken it just as I did—remember—
If such a declaration had not pleased me?
And, when I tried my utmost to persuade you
Not to accept the marriage that was talked of,
What should my earnestness have hinted to you
If not the interest that you 've inspired,
And my chagrin, should such a match compel me
To share a heart I want all to myself?

TARTUFFE

'T is, past a doubt, the height of happiness,
To hear such words from lips we dote upon;
Their honeyed sweetness pours through all my senses
Long draughts of suavity ineffable.
My heart employs its utmost zeal to please you,
And counts your love its one beatitude;
And yet that heart must beg that you allow it
To doubt a little its felicity.
I well might think these words an honest trick
To make me break off this approaching marriage;
And if I may express myself quite plainly,
I cannot trust these too enchanting words
Until the granting of some little favour
I sigh for, shall assure me of their truth
And build within my soul, on firm foundations,
A lasting faith in your sweet charity.

ELMIRE, *coughing to draw her husband's attention*

What! Must you go so fast?—and all at once

Exhaust the whole love of a woman's heart?
She does herself the violence to make
This dear confession of her love, and you
Are not yet satisfied, and will not be
Without the granting of her utmost favours?

TARTUFFE

The less a blessing is deserved, the less
We dare to hope for it; and words alone
Can ill assuage our love's desires. A fate
Too full of happiness, seems doubtful still;
We must enjoy it ere we can believe it.
And I, who know how little I deserve
Your goodness, doubt the fortunes of my daring;
So I shall trust to nothing, madam, till
You have convinced my love by something real.

ELMIRE

Ah! How your love enacts the tyrant's rôle,
And throws my mind into a strange confusion!
With what fierce sway it rules a conquered heart,
And violently will have its wishes granted!
What! Is there no escape from your pursuit?
No respite even?—not a breathing space?
Nay, is it decent to be so exacting,
And so abuse by urgency the weakness
You may discover in a woman's heart?

TARTUFFE

But if my worship wins your gracious favour,
Then why refuse me some sure proof thereof?

ELMIRE

But how can I consent to what you wish,
Without offending Heaven you talk so much of?

TARTUFFE

If Heaven is all that stands now in my way,
I 'll easily remove that little hindrance;
Your heart need not hold back for such a trifle.

ELMIRE

But they affright us so with Heaven's commands!

TARTUFFE

I can dispel these foolish fears, dear madam;
I know the art of pacifying scruples.
Heaven forbids, 't is true, some satisfactions;
But we find means to make things right with Heaven.

(*'T is a scoundrel speaking.*) [1]

There is a science, madam, that instructs us
How to enlarge the limits of our conscience
According to our various occasions,
And rectify the evil of the deed
According to our purity of motive.
I 'll duly teach you all these secrets, madam;
You only need to let yourself be guided.
Content my wishes, have no fear at all;
I answer for 't, and take the sin upon me.

(*Elmire coughs still louder.*)

Your cough is very bad.

ELMIRE

Yes, I 'm in torture.

TARTUFFE

Would you accept this bit of licorice?

[1] Molière's note, in the original edition.

ELMIRE

The case is obstinate, I find; and all
The licorice in the world will do no good.

TARTUFFE

'T is very trying.

ELMIRE

More than words can say.

TARTUFFE

In any case, your scruple 's easily
Removed. With me you 're sure of secrecy,
And there 's no harm unless a thing is known.
The public scandal is what brings offence,
And secret sinning is not sin at all.

ELMIRE, *after coughing again*

So then, I see I must resolve to yield;
I must consent to grant you everything,
And cannot hope to give full satisfaction,
Or win full confidence, at lesser cost.
No doubt 't is very hard to come to this;
'T is quite against my will I go so far;
But since I must be forced to it, since nothing
That can be said suffices for belief,
Since more convincing proof is still demanded,
I must make up my mind to humour people.
If my consent give reason for offence,
So much the worse for him who forced me to it;
The fault can surely not be counted mine.

TARTUFFE

It need not, madam; and the thing itself . . .

ELMIRE

Open the door, I pray you, and just see
Whether my husband 's not there, in the hall.

TARTUFFE

Why take such care for him? Between ourselves,
He is a man to lead round by the nose.
He 's capable of glorying in our meetings;
I 've fooled him so, he 'd see all, and deny it.

ELMIRE

No matter; go, I beg you, look about,
And carefully examine every corner.

SCENE VI

ORGON, ELMIRE

ORGON, *crawling out from under the table*

That is, I own, a man . . . abominable!
I can't get over it; the whole thing floors me.

ELMIRE

What? You come out so soon? You cannot mean it!
Go back under the table; 't is not time yet;
Wait till the end, to see, and make quite certain,
And don't believe a thing on mere conjecture.

ORGON

Nothing more wicked e'er came out of Hell.

ELMIRE

Dear me! Don't go and credit things too lightly.
No, let yourself be thoroughly convinced;

Don't yield too soon, for fear you 'll be mistaken.

(*As Tartuffe enters, she makes her husband stand behind her.*)

SCENE VII

TARTUFFE, ELMIRE, ORGON

TARTUFFE, *not seeing Orgon*

All things conspire toward my satisfaction,
Madam. I 've searched the whole apartment through.
There 's no one here; and now my ravished soul . . .

ORGON, *stopping him*

Softly! You are too eager in your amours;
You need n't be so passionate. Ah ha!
My holy man! You want to put it on me!
How is your soul abandoned to temptation!
Marry my daughter, eh?—and want my wife, too?
I doubted long enough if this was earnest,
Expecting all the time the tone would change;
But now the proof 's been carried far enough;
I 'm satisfied, and ask no more, for my part.

ELMIRE, *to Tartuffe*

'T was quite against my character to play
This part; but I was forced to treat you so.

TARTUFFE

What? You believe . . . ?

ORGON

Come now, no protestations.
Get out from here, and make no fuss about it.

TARTUFFE

But my intent . . .

ORGON

That talk is out of season.
You leave my house this instant.

TARTUFFE

You 're the one
To leave it, you who play the master here!
This house belongs to me, I 'll have you know,
And show you plainly it 's no use to turn
To these low tricks, to pick a quarrel with me,
And that you can't insult me at your pleasure,
For I have wherewith to confound your lies,
Avenge offended Heaven, and compel
Those to repent who talk to me of leaving.

SCENE VIII

ELMIRE, ORGON

ELMIRE

What sort of speech is this? What can it mean?

ORGON

My faith, I 'm dazed. This is no laughing matter.

ELMIRE

What?

ORGON

From his words I see my great mistake;
The deed of gift is one thing troubles me.

ELMIRE

The deed of gift . . .

ORGON

Yes, that is past recall.
But I 've another thing to make me anxious.

ELMIRE

What 's that?

ORGON

You shall know all. Let 's see at once
Whether a certain box is still upstairs.

ACT V

SCENE I

ORGON, CLEANTE

CLEANTE

Whither away so fast?

ORGON

How should I know?

CLEANTE

Methinks we should begin by taking counsel
To see what can be done to meet the case.

ORGON

I 'm all worked up about that wretched box.
More than all else it drives me to despair.

CLEANTE

That box must hide some mighty mystery?

ORGON

Argas, my friend who is in trouble, brought it
Himself, most secretly, and left it with me.
He chose me, in his exile, for this trust;
And on these documents, from what he said,
I judge his life and property depend.

CLEANTE

How could you trust them to another's hands?

ORGON

By reason of a conscientious scruple.
I went straight to my traitor, to confide
In him; his sophistry made me believe
That I must give the box to him to keep,
So that, in case of search, I might deny
My having it at all, and still, by favour
Of this evasion, keep my conscience clear
Even in taking oath against the truth.

CLEANTE

Your case is bad, so far as I can see;
This deed of gift, this trusting of the secret
To him, were both—to state my frank opinion—
Steps that you took too lightly; he can lead you
To any length, with these for hostages;
And since he holds you at such disadvantage,
You 'd be still more imprudent, to provoke him;
So you must go some gentler way about.

ORGON

What! Can a soul so base, a heart so false,
Hide neath the semblance of such touching fervour
I took him in, a vagabond, a beggar! . . .
'T is too much! No more pious folk for me!
I shall abhor them utterly forever,
And henceforth treat them worse than any devil.

CLEANTE

So! There you go again, quite off the handle!
In nothing do you keep an even temper.
You never know what reason is, but always
Jump first to one extreme, and then the other.

You see your error, and you recognise
That you 've been cozened by a feignèd zeal;
But to make up for 't, in the name of reason,
Why should you plunge into a worse mistake,
And find no difference in character
Between a worthless scamp, and all good people?
What! Just because a rascal boldly duped you
With pompous show of false austerity,
Must you needs have it everybody 's like him,
And no one 's truly pious nowadays?
Leave such conclusions to mere infidels;
Distinguish virtue from its counterfeit,
Don't give esteem too quickly, at a venture,
But try to keep, in this, the golden mean.
If you can help it, don't uphold imposture;
But do not rail at true devoutness, either;
And if you must fall into one extreme,
Then rather err again the other way.

SCENE II

DAMIS, ORGON, CLEANTE

DAMIS

What! father, can the scoundrel threaten you,
Forget the many benefits received,
And in his base abominable pride
Make of your very favours arms against you?

ORGON

Too true, my son. It tortures me to think on 't.

DAMIS

Let me alone, I 'll chop his ears off for him.
We must deal roundly with his insolence;

'T is I must free you from him at a blow;
'T is I, to set things right, must strike him down.

CLEANTE

Spoke like a true young man. Now just calm down,
And moderate your towering tantrums, will you?
We live in such an age, with such a king,
That violence can not advance our cause.

SCENE III

MADAME PERNELLE, ORGON, ELMIRE, CLEANTE, MARIANE, DAMIS, DORINE

MADAME PERNELLE

What 's this? I hear of fearful mysteries!

ORGON

Strange things indeed, for my own eyes to witness;
You see how I 'm requited for my kindness.
I zealously receive a wretched beggar,
I lodge him, entertain him like my brother,
Load him with benefactions every day,
Give him my daughter, give him all my fortune:
And he meanwhile, the villain, rascal, wretch,
Tries with black treason to suborn my wife,
And not content with such a foul design,
He dares to menace me with my own favours,
And would make use of those advantages
Which my too foolish kindness armed him with,
To ruin me, to take my fortune from me,
And leave me in the state I saved him from.

DORINE

Poor man!

MADAME PERNELLE

My son, I cannot possibly
Believe he could intend so black a deed.

ORGON

What?

MADAME PERNELLE

Worthy men are still the sport of envy.

ORGON

Mother, what do you mean by such a speech?

MADAME PERNELLE

There are strange goings-on about your house,
And everybody knows your people hate him.

ORGON

What 's that to do with what I tell you now?

MADAME PERNELLE

I always said, my son, when you were little:
That virtue here below is hated ever;
The envious may die, but envy never.

ORGON

What 's that fine speech to do with present facts?

MADAME PERNELLE

Be sure, they 've forged a hundred silly lies . . .

ORGON

I 've told you once, I saw it all myself.

MADAME PERNELLE

For slanderers abound in calumnies . . .

ORGON

Mother, you 'd make me damn my soul. I tell you
I saw with my own eyes his shamelessness.

MADAME PERNELLE

Their tongues for spitting venom never lack,
There 's nothing here below they 'll not attack.

ORGON

Your speech has not a single grain of sense.
I saw it, harkee, saw it, with these eyes
I saw—d' ye know what *saw* means?—must I say it
A hundred times, and din it in your ears?

MADAME PERNELLE

My dear, appearances are oft deceiving,
And seeing should n't always be believing.

ORGON

I 'll go mad.

MADAME PERNELLE

False suspicions may delude,
And good to evil oft is misconstrued.

ORGON

Must I construe as Christian charity
The wish to kiss my wife!

MADAME PERNELLE

You must, at least,
Have just foundation for accusing people,
And wait until you see a thing for sure.

ORGON

The devil! How could I see any surer?
Should I have waited till, before my eyes,
He . . . No, you 'll make me say things quite improper.

MADAME PERNELLE

In short, 't is known too pure a zeal inflames him;
And so, I cannot possibly conceive
That he should try to do what 's charged against him.

ORGON

If you were not my mother, I should say
Such things! . . . I know not what, I 'm so enraged!

DORINE, *to Orgon*

Fortune has paid you fair, to be so doubted;
You flouted our report, now yours is flouted.

CLEANTE

We 're wasting time here in the merest trifling,
Which we should rather use in taking measures
To guard ourselves against the scoundrel's threats.

DAMIS

You think his impudence could go so far?

ELMIRE

For one, I can't believe it possible;
Why, his ingratitude would be too patent.

CLEANTE

Don't trust to that; he 'll find abundant warrant
To give good colour to his acts against you;

And for less cause than this, a strong cabal
Can make one's life a labyrinth of troubles.
I tell you once again: armed as he is
You never should have pushed him quite so far.

ORGON

True; yet what could I do? The rascal's pride
Made me lose all control of my resentment.

CLEANTE

I wish with all my heart that some pretence
Of peace could be patched up between you two.

ELMIRE

If I had known what weapons he was armed with,
I never should have raised such an alarm,
And my . . .

ORGON, *to Dorine, seeing Mr. Loyal come in*

Who 's coming now? Go quick, find out.
I 'm in a fine state to receive a visit!

SCENE VI

ORGON, MADAME PERNELLE, ELMIRE, MARIANE, CLEANTE, DAMIS, DORINE, MR. LOYAL

MR. LOYAL, *to Dorine, at the back of the stage*

Good day, good sister. Pray you, let me see
The master of the house.

DORINE

He 's occupied;
I think he can see nobody at present.

MR. LOYAL

I 'm not by way of being unwelcome here.
My coming can, I think, nowise displease him;
My errand will be found to his advantage.

DORINE

Your name, then?

MR. LOYAL

Tell him simply that his friend
Mr. Tartuffe has sent me, for his goods . . .

DORINE, *to Orgon*

It is a man who comes, with civil manners,
Sent by Tartuffe, he says, upon an errand
That you 'll be pleased with.

CLEANTE, *to Orgon*

Surely you must see him,
And find out who he is, and what he wants.

ORGON, *to Cléante*

Perhaps he 's come to make it up between us;
How shall I treat him?

CLEANTE

You must not get angry;
And if he talks of reconciliation,
Accept it.

MR. LOYAL, *to Orgon*

Sir, good-day. And Heaven send
Harm to your enemies, favour to you.

ORGON, *aside to Cléante*

This mild beginning suits with my conjectures
And promises some compromise already.

MR. LOYAL

All of your house has long been dear to me;
I had the honour, sir, to serve your father.

ORGON

Sir, I am much ashamed, and ask your pardon
For not recalling now your face or name.

MR. LOYAL

My name is Loyal. I 'm from Normandy.
My office is court-bailiff, in despite
Of envy; and for forty years, thank Heaven,
It 's been my fortune to perform that office
With honour. So I 've come, sir, by your leave,
To render service of a certain writ . . .

ORGON

What, you are here to . . .

MR. LOYAL

Pray, sir, don't be angry.
'T is nothing, sir, but just a little summons:—
Order to vacate, you and yours, this house,
Move out your furniture, make room for others,
And that without delay or putting off,
As needs must be . . .

ORGON

I? Leave this house?

MR. LOYAL

Yes, please, sir.
The house is now, as you well know, of course,
Mr. Tartuffe's. And he, beyond dispute,
Of all your goods is henceforth lord and master
By virtue of a contract here attached,
Drawn in due form, and unassailable.

DAMIS, *to Mr. Loyal*

Your insolence is monstrous, and astounding!

MR. LOYAL, *to Damis*

I have no business, sir, that touches you;

(*Pointing to Orgon*)

This is the gentleman. He 's fair and courteous,
And knows too well a gentleman's behaviour
To wish in any wise to question justice.

ORGON

But . . .

MR. LOYAL

Sir, I know you would not for a million
Wish to rebel; like a good citizen
You 'll let me put in force the court's decree.

DAMIS

Your long black gown may well, before you know it,
Mister Court-bailiff, get a thorough beating.

MR. LOYAL, *to Orgon*

Sir, make your son be silent or withdraw.
I should be loath to have to set things down,
And see your names inscribed in my report.

DORINE, *aside*

This Mr. Loyal's looks are most disloyal.

MR. LOYAL

I have much feeling for respectable
And honest folk like you, sir, and consented
To serve these papers, only to oblige you,
And thus prevent the choice of any other
Who, less possessed of zeal for you than I am,
Might order matters in less gentle fashion.

ORGON

And how could one do worse than order people
Out of their house?

MR. LOYAL

Why, we allow you time;
And even will suspend until to-morrow
The execution of the order, sir.
I 'll merely, without scandal, quietly,
Come here and spend the night, with half a score
Of officers; and just for form's sake, please,
You 'll bring your keys to me, before retiring.
I will take care not to disturb your rest,
And see there 's no unseemly conduct here.
But by to-morrow, and at early morning,
You must make haste to move your least belongings;
My men will help you—I have chosen strong ones
To serve you, sir, in clearing out the house.
No one could act more generously, I fancy,
And, since I 'm treating you with great indulgence,
I beg you 'll do as well by me, and see
I 'm not disturbed in my discharge of duty.

ORGON

I 'd give this very minute, and not grudge it,
The hundred best gold louis I have left,
If I could just indulge myself, and land
My fist, for one good square one, on his snout.

CLEANTE, *aside to Orgon*

Careful!—don't make things worse.

DAMIS

Such insolence!
I hardly can restrain myself. My hands
Are itching to be at him.

DORINE

By my faith,
With such a fine broad back, good Mr. Loyal,
A little beating would become you well.

MR. LOYAL

My girl, such infamous words are actionable,
And warrants can be issued against women.

CLEANTE, *to Mr. Loyal*

Enough of this discussion, sir; have done.
Give us the paper, and then leave us, pray.

MR. LOYAL

Then *au revoir*. Heaven keep you from disaster!

ORGON

May Heaven confound you both, you and your master!

SCENE V

ORGON, MADAME PERNELLE, ELMIRE, CLEANTE, MARIANE, DAMIS, DORINE

ORGON

Well, mother, am I right or am I not?
This writ may help you now to judge the matter.
Or don't you see his treason even yet?

MADAME PERNELLE

I 'm all amazed, befuddled, and beflustered!

DORINE, *to Orgon*

You are quite wrong, you have no right to blame him;
This action only proves his good intentions.
Love for his neighbour makes his virtue perfect;
And knowing money is a root of evil,
In Christian charity, he 'd take away
Whatever things may hinder your salvation.

ORGON

Be still. You always need to have that told you.

CLEANTE, *to Orgon*

Come, let us see what course you are to follow.

ELMIRE

Go and expose his bold ingratitude.
Such action must invalidate the contract;
His perfidy must now appear too black
To bring him the success that he expects.

SCENE VI

VALERE, ORGON, MADAME PERNELLE, ELMIRE, CLEANTE, MARIANE, DAMIS, DORINE

VALERE

'T is with regret, sir, that I bring bad news;
But urgent danger forces me to do so.
A close and intimate friend of mine, who knows
The interest I take in what concerns you,
Has gone so far, for my sake, as to break
The secrecy that 's due to state affairs,
And sent me word but now, that leaves you only
The one expedient of sudden flight.
The villain who so long imposed upon you,
Found means, an hour ago, to see the prince,
And to accuse you (among other things)
By putting in his hands the private strong-box
Of a state-criminal, whose guilty secret,
You, failing in your duty as a subject,
(He says) have kept. I know no more of it
Save that a warrant 's drawn against you, sir,
And for the greater surety, that same rascal
Comes with the officer who must arrest you.

CLEANTE

His rights are armed; and this is how the scoundrel
Seeks to secure the property he claims.

ORGON

Man is a wicked animal, I 'll own it!

VALERE

The least delay may still be fatal, sir.
I have my carriage, and a thousand louis,

Provided for your journey, at the door.
Let 's lose no time; the bolt is swift to strike,
And such as only flight can save you from.
I 'll be your guide to seek a place of safety,
And stay with you until you reach it, sir.

ORGON

How much I owe to your obliging care!
Another time must serve to thank you fitly;
And I pray Heaven to grant me so much favour
That I may some day recompense your service.
Good-bye; see to it, all of you . . .

CLEANTE

Come, hurry;
We 'll see to everything that 's needful, brother.

SCENE VII

TARTUFFE, AN OFFICER, MADAME PERNELLE, ORGON, ELMIRE, CLEANTE, MARIANE, VALERE, DAMIS, DORINE

TARTUFFE, *stopping Orgon*

Softly, sir, softly; do not run so fast;
You have n't far to go to find your lodging;
By order of the prince, we here arrest you.

ORGON

Traitor! You saved this worst stroke for the last;
This crowns your perfidies, and ruins me.

TARTUFFE

I shall not be embittered by your insults,
For Heaven has taught me to endure all things.

CLEANTE

Your moderation, I must own, is great.

DAMIS

How shamelessly the wretch makes bold with Heaven!

TARTUFFE

Your ravings cannot move me; all my thought
Is but to do my duty.

MARIANE

You must claim
Great glory from this honourable act.

TARTUFFE

The act cannot be aught but honourable,
Coming from that high power which sends me here.

ORGON

Ungrateful wretch, do you forget 't was I
That rescued you from utter misery?

TARTUFFE

I 've not forgot some help you may have given;
But my first duty now is toward my prince.
The higher power of that most sacred claim
Must stifle in my heart all gratitude;
And to such puissant ties I 'd sacrifice
My friend, my wife, my kindred, and myself.

ELMIRE

The hypocrite!

DORINE

How well he knows the trick
Of cloaking him with what we most revere!

CLEANTE

But if the motive that you make parade of
Is perfect as you say, why should it wait
To show itself, until the day he caught you
Soliciting his wife? How happens it
You have not thought to go inform against him
Until his honour forces him to drive you
Out of his house? And though I need not mention
That he 'd just given you his whole estate,
Still, if you meant to treat him now as guilty,
How could you then consent to take his gift?

TARTUFFE, *to the officer*

Pray, sir, deliver me from all this clamour;
Be good enough to carry out your order.

THE OFFICER

Yes, I 've too long delayed its execution;
'T is very fitting you should urge me to it;
So therefore, you must follow me at once
To prison, where you 'll find your lodging ready.

TARTUFFE

Who? I, sir?

THE OFFICER

You.

TARTUFFE

But why to prison?

THE OFFICER

You
Are not the one to whom I owe account.
You, sir, (*to Orgon*), recover from your hot alarm.

Our prince is not a friend to double dealing,
His eyes can read men's inmost hearts, and all
The art of hypocrites cannot deceive him.
His sharp discernment sees things clear and true;
His mind cannot too easily be swayed,
For reason always holds the balance even.
He honours and exalts true piety,
But knows the false, and views it with disgust.
This fellow was by no means apt to fool him,
Far subtler snares have failed against his wisdom,
And his quick insight pierced immediately
The hidden baseness of this tortuous heart.
Accusing you, the knave betrayed himself,
And by true recompense of Heaven's justice
He stood revealed before our monarch's eyes
A scoundrel known before by other names,
Whose horrid crimes, detailed at length, might fill
A long-drawn history of many volumes.
Our monarch—to resolve you in a word—
Detesting his ingratitude and baseness,
Added this horror to his other crimes,
And sent me hither under his direction
To see his insolence out-top itself,
And force him then to give you satisfaction.
Your papers, which the traitor says are his,
I am to take from him, and give you back;
The deed of gift transferring your estate
Our monarch's sovereign will makes null and void;
And for the secret personal offence
Your friend involved you in, he pardons you:
Thus he rewards your recent zeal, displayed
In helping to maintain his rights, and shows
How well his heart, when it is least expected,

Knows how to recompense a noble deed,
And will not let true merit miss its due,
Remembering always rather good than evil.

DORINE

Now Heaven be praised!

MADAME PERNELLE

At last I breathe again.

ELMIRE

A happy outcome!

MARIANE

Who 'd have dared to hope it?

ORGON, *to Tartuffe, who is being led off by the officer*

There, traitor! Now you 're . . .

SCENE VIII

MADAME PERNELLE, ORGON, ELMIRE, MARIANE, CLEANTE, VALERE, DAMIS, DORINE

CLEANTE

Brother, hold!—and don't
Descend to such indignities, I beg you.
Leave the poor wretch to his unhappy fate,
And let remorse oppress him, but not you.
Hope rather that his heart may now return
To virtue, hate his vice, reform his ways,
And win the pardon of our glorious prince;
While you must straightway go, and on your knees
Repay with thanks his noble generous kindness.

ORGON

Well said! We 'll go, and at his feet kneel down,
With joy to thank him for his goodness shown;
And this first duty done, with honours due,
We 'll then attend upon another, too,
With wedded happiness reward Valère,
And crown a lover noble and sincere.

LE MISANTHROPE

COMEDIE EN CINQ ACTES

4 JUIN 1666

THE MISANTHROPE

A COMEDY IN FIVE ACTS

JUNE 4, 1666

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

An early biographer of Molière, Grimarest, stated that *The Misanthrope* was very coldly received at its first performances, and a tradition became established that the play had to be withdrawn after the fourth night, and that later Molière, in order to bring the public to see this most serious of his plays, had to give with it his new farce of *The Doctor by Compulsion*, which was a great success.

This tradition is entirely refuted by the facts recorded in La Grange's diary, in which he gives the actual receipts of the theatre for each evening's performance. *The Misanthrope* on its appearance had twenty-one successive performances—a rather long run for any play in those days, when each one of the three theatres in Paris necessarily had a varied and constantly changing repertory—and the receipts for more than half of these performances were quite satisfactory, especially in view of the fact that the play was given in June and ran through July into August. The receipts for the tenth performance, and for the eighteenth, twentieth, and twenty-first, fell below 300 francs, and after the twenty-first performance *The Doctor by Compulsion* was substituted for *The Misanthrope*, not, as the tradition would have us believe, given with it. About a month later the two plays were given together, for five performances only ; and during the rest of the year *The Misanthrope* was several times given alone, but not again with *The Doctor by Compulsion*.

It has become the habit to think of *The Misanthrope* as the play in which Molière most reveals himself, and to give it a place in his work similar to that of *Tasso* in Goethe's, and *Hamlet* in Shakspere's. Indeed, many go so far as to believe that in Alceste he was simply putting his own character on the stage, and in Célimène that of his young wife Armande; and that in the plot of the play he was giving a true picture of their relations. This is certainly going too far. Such a supposition did not occur to Molière's contemporaries, who found other originals, no less authentic and certain, for the character of Alceste. One of these was the chief critic of the age, Molière's friend, Boileau, who hated bad verse even more intensely than Alceste, and is said to have remarked à propos of Chapelain's *Pucelle* that any one who was capable of writing it deserved to be hanged. Boileau himself says in a letter to the Marquis de Mimeure: "I played the rôle of the Misanthrope of Molière, or rather I played my own rôle, the wrath of the Misanthrope against bad verses having been, as Molière himself several times admitted to me, copied from me as a model." Other traits of Alceste's character may have been taken from the Duc de Montausier, as his contemporaries thought. An anecdote, given by Saint-Simon, relates that the Duke was at first enraged on hearing that he had been ridiculed; but after seeing the play, he called Molière and thanked him, saying that if Molière had taken him as the model of this character, he had done him great honour. Molière undoubtedly put something of himself, too, into the character of Alceste; but it must not be forgotten that he also put much of himself into the rôle of Philinte. In Célimène he created a rôle admirably fitted to the character and talents of Armande; but again it is not to be forgotten that the admirable rôles of Elmire in *Tartuffe* and of Henriette in *Les Femmes*

savantes were also written for her. The subject of jealousy had always interested Molière; he had treated it more or less lightly in his earliest plays, and very seriously in *Don Garcie de Navarre*, some of the lines of which he incorporated in *The Misanthrope*. It is unthinkable that he should have deliberately pictured upon the stage the circumstances of his own life; yet his own life and character held within themselves, in solution as it were, the life and character of Alceste.

CHARACTERS	ACTORS [1]
ALCESTE, in love with Célimène	MOLIERE
PHILINTE, friend of Alceste	LA THORILLIERE
ORONTE, in love with Célimène	DU CROISY
CELIMENE	Mlle. MOLIERE
ELIANTE, Célimène's cousin	Mlle. DEBRIE
ARSINOE, friend of Célimène	Mlle. DUPARC
ACASTE, CLITANDRE } marquises	LA GRANGE, HUBERT
BASQUE, Célimène's servant	
AN OFFICER of the Marshals' Court	DEBRIE
DUBOIS, Alceste's valet	BEJART

The Scene is at Paris

[1] The distribution of the rôles is conjectural, except for those of Célimène and Alceste.

THE MISANTHROPE

A COMEDY

ACT I

SCENE I

PHILINTE, ALCESTE

PHILINTE

What is it? What 's the matter?

ALCESTE, *seated*

Leave me, pray.

PHILINTE

But tell me first, what new fantastic humour . . .

ALCESTE

Leave me alone, I say. Out of my sight!

PHILINTE

But can't you listen, at least, and not be angry?

ALCESTE

I will be angry, and I will not listen.

PHILINTE

I cannot understand your gusts of temper;
And though we 're friends, I 'll be the very first . . .

ALCESTE, *starting to his feet*

What, I, your friend? Go strike that off your books.
I have professed to be so hitherto;
But after seeing what you did just now,
I tell you flatly I am so no longer
And want no place in such corrupted hearts.

PHILINTE

Am I so very wicked, do you think?

ALCESTE

Go to, you ought to die for very shame!
Such conduct can have no excuse; it must
Arouse abhorrence in all men of honour.
I see you load a man with your caresses,
Profess for him the utmost tenderness,
And overcharge the zeal of your embracings
With protestations, promises, and oaths;
And when I come to ask you who he is
You hardly can remember even his name!
Your ardour cools the moment he is gone,
And you inform me you care nothing for him!
Good God! 't is shameful, abject, infamous,
So basely to play traitor to your soul;
And if, by evil chance, I 'd done as much,
I should go straight and hang myself for spite.

PHILINTE

It does n't seem to me a hanging matter;
And I 'll petition for your gracious leave

A little to commute your rigorous sentence,
And not go hang myself for that, an't please you.

ALCESTE

How unbecoming is your pleasantry!

PHILINTE

But seriously, what would you have me do?

ALCESTE

Be genuine; and like a man of honour
Let no word pass unless it 's from the heart.

PHILINTE

But when a man salutes you joyfully,
You have to pay him back in his own coin,
Make what response you can to his politeness,
And render pledge for pledge, and oath for oath.

ALCESTE

No, no, I can't endure these abject manners
So much affected by your men of fashion;
There 's nothing I detest like the contortions
Of all your noble protestation-mongers,
So generous with meaningless embraces,
So ready with their gifts of empty words,
Who vie with all men in civilities,
And treat alike the true man and the coxcomb.
What use is it to have a man embrace you,
Swear friendship, zeal, esteem, and faithful love,
And loudly praise you to your face, then run
And do as much for any scamp he meets?
No, no. No self-respecting man can ever
Accept esteem that 's prostituted so;

The highest honour has but little charm
If given to all the universe alike ;
Real love must rest upon some preference ;
You might as well love none, as everybody.
Since you go in for these prevailing vices,
By God, you 're not my kind of man, that 's all ;
I 'll be no sharer in the fellowship
Of hearts that make for merit no distinction ;
I must be singled out ; to put it flatly,
The friend of all mankind 's no friend for me.

PHILINTE

But, while we 're of the world, we must observe
Some outward courtesies that custom calls for.

ALCESTE

No, no, I tell you ; we must ruthlessly
Chastise this shameful trade in make-beliefs
Of friendship. Let 's be men ; on all occasions
Show in our words the truth that 's in our hearts,
Letting the heart itself speak out, not hiding
Our feelings under masks of compliment.

PHILINTE

There 's many a time and place when utter frankness
Would be ridiculous, or even worse ;
And sometimes, no offence to your high honour,
'T is well to hide the feelings in our hearts.
Would it be proper, decent, in good taste,
To tell a thousand people your opinion
About themselves? When you detest a man,
Must you declare it to him, to his face?

ALCESTE

Yes.

PHILINTE

What!—you 'd tell that ancient dame, Emilia,
That she 's too old to play the pretty girl,
And that her painting is a public scandal?

ALCESTE

Of course.

PHILINTE

And Dorilas, that he 's a bore;
And that he 's wearied every ear at court
With tales of his exploits and high extraction?

ALCESTE

By all means.

PHILINTE

You are joking.

ANCESTE

No. I 'll spare
No one. My eyes are far too much offended.
The court and town alike present me nothing
But objects to provoke my spleen; I fall
Into black humours and profound disgust,
To see men treat each other as they do;
There 's nowhere aught but dastard flattery,
Injustice, treachery, selfishness, deceit;
I can't endure it, I go mad—and mean
Squarely to break with all the human race.

PHILINTE

This philosophic wrath 's a bit too savage.
I laugh at the black moods I find you in,

And think that we, who were brought up together,
Are like those brothers in the *School for Husbands*,
Whose . . .

ALCESTE

Heavens, have done your dull comparisons.

PHILINTE

No, really now, have done your own vagaries.
The world will not reform for all your meddling;
And since plain speaking has such charms for you,
I 'll tell you plainly that your strange distemper
Is thought as good 's a play, where'er you go;
Such mighty wrath against the ways o' the world
Makes you a laughing-stock for many people.

ALCESTE

So much the better! Zounds, so much the better!
The very thing I want; I 'm overjoyed;
'T is a good sign. I hate mankind so much,
I should be sorry if they thought me wise.

PHILINTE

You have a great spite against human nature.

ALCESTE

Yes, I 've conceived a frightful hatred for it.

PHILINTE

And are all mortals, quite without exception,
To be included in this detestation?
There are some, surely, even now-a-days . . .

ALCESTE

There 's no exception, and I hate all men:

A part, because they 're wicked and do evil;
The rest, because they fawn upon the wicked,
And fail to feel for them that healthy hatred
Which vice should always rouse in virtuous hearts.
You see the rank injustice of this fawning,
Shown toward the bare-faced scoundrel I 'm at law with.
The traitor's face shows plainly through his mask,
And everywhere he 's known for what he is;
His up-turned eyes, his honeyed canting voice,
Impose on none but strangers. All men know
That this confounded, low-bred, sneaking scamp
Has made his way by doing dirty jobs,
And that the splendid fortune these have brought him
Turns merit bitter and makes virtue blush.
Whatever shameful names you heap upon him,
There 's no one to defend his wretched honour;
Call him a cheat, a rogue, a cursed rascal,
And every one agrees, none contradicts you.
But yet his grinning face is always welcomed;
He worms in everywhere, he 's greeted, smiled on;
And if there is preferment to compete for,
Intrigue will win it for him, from the worthiest.
Damnation! It offends me mortally
To see how people compromise with vice;
Sometimes I 'm seized upon by sudden longings
To flee from all mankind, and live in deserts.

PHILINTE

Don't take the manners of the time so hard!
Be a bit merciful to human nature;
Let us not judge it with the utmost rigour,

But look upon its faults with some indulgence.
Our social life demands a pliant virtue;
Too strict uprightness may be blameworthy;
Sound judgment always will avoid extremes,
And will be sober even in its virtue.
The stiff unbending morals of old times
Clash with our modern age and common usage;
They ask of mortal men too much perfection;
We must yield to the times, and not too hardly;
And 't is the very utmost height of folly
To take upon you to reform the world.
I see a hundred things each day, as you do,
That might be better, were they different;
And yet, whatever I see happening,
I don't fly in a passion, as you do;
I quietly accept men as they are,
Make up my mind to tolerate their conduct,
And think my calmness is, for court or town,
As good philosophy as is your choler.

ALCESTE

But can this calmness, sir, that talks so well,
Be moved at nothing? If perchance a friend
Betrays you—tries by fraud to steal your fortune—
Or if vile slanders are devised against you,
Will you behold all this and not get angry?

PHILINTE

Yes, I can look on faults, at which your soul
Revolts, as vices linked with human nature;
To put it in a word, I 'm no more shocked
To see a man unjust, deceitful, selfish,
Than to see vultures ravenous for prey,
Or monkeys mischievous, or wolves blood-thirsty.

ALCESTE

What! see myself betrayed, robbed, torn in pieces,
And not . . . Good heavens! I won't talk with
you,
Your reasoning is such sheer sophistry!

PHILINTE

In truth, you had far better hold your tongue.
Storm somewhat less against your adversary,
And give some slight attention to your suit.

ALCESTE

I 'll give it none at all—that point is settled.

PHILINTE

Who will solicit for you, then, d' ye think?

ALCESTE

Who? Reason, equity, and my just rights.

PHILINTE

You won't go call on any of the judges?

ALCESTE

No. Is my cause unjust, or even doubtful?

PHILINTE

No, I agree with you. But still, intrigue . . .

ALCESTE

No. I won't stir a step. My mind 's made up.
My cause is wrong, or right.

PHILINTE

Don't trust to that.

ALCESTE

I shall not budge.

PHILINTE

Your adversary 's strong,
And may, through his cabal, bear off . . .

ALCESTE

No matter.

PHILINTE

You 'll find you 've made a great mistake.

ALCESTE

So be it.
I want to see how this thing will turn out.

PHILINTE

But . . .

ALCESTE

It will be a joy to lose my suit.

PHILINTE

But surely . . .

ALCESTE

By this trial I shall see
If men can be sufficiently perverse,
Rascally, villainous, and impudent
To do me wrong before the universe.

PHILINTE

Lord, what a man!

ALCESTE

No matter what it costs me,
Just for the beauty of the thing, I 'd rather
My suit were lost.

PHILINTE

People would laugh at you,
Alceste, if they could hear you talk so, truly.

ALCESTE

So much the worse for those who laughed.

PHILINTE

But tell me:
This strict integrity that you demand,
This truthfulness exact and scrupulous—
Say, do you find them here, in her you love?
For my part, I 'm amazed that you, while being
(Or so 't would seem) so utterly at odds
With all the human race, should, spite of all
That makes it hateful to you, find in it
A charm to stay your eyes. Still more surprising
Is that strange choice your heart has fixed upon.
Though Eliante, the true, has shown a kindness
For you, and though Arsinoé, the prude,
Looks on you with an eye of favour, still
Your heart rejects their love, while Célimène,
Whose taste for slander and coquettish temper
So truly ape the manners of the age,
Holds it, for pastime, captive in her chains.
How happens it that, when you hate our manners
So bitterly, you bear with them in her?
Are they no longer false when housed so fairly?
Do you not see, or do you pardon them?

ALCESTE

No, no. The love I feel for this young widow
Can't make me blind to any of her faults.
For all the passion she 's inspired me with,
I am the first to see them and condemn them.
Yet none the less—I must confess my weakness—
Do what I will, she still finds ways to please me;
In vain I see her faults, in vain I blame them,
Still in my own despite she makes me love her;
Her charms prevail; no doubt my love, in time,
Will purge her of the vices of the age.

PHILINTE

If you accomplish that, you will do wonders.
You think she loves you, then?

ALCESTE

By heaven, I do!
I could not love her if I did n't think so.

PHILINTE

But if her fondness for you is confessed,
Why should you fret yourself about your rivals?

ALCESTE

Because a heart that truly loves, demands
To have its loved one wholly to itself.
I 've come here now to tell her all I feel
Upon this point.

PHILINTE

If I could have my way
I should address my suit to Eliante,
Her cousin. She is steadfast and sincere,
Esteems you, and would be a fitter choice.

ALCESTE

Yes, yes, quite true. My reason tells me so
Each day. But reason does not govern love.

PHILINTE

I fear for your affections; and your hope
May well . . .

SCENE II

ORONTE, ALCESTE, PHILINTE

ORONTE, *to Alceste*

I learned below that Eliante
And Célimène have both gone out a-shopping.
But since they told me you were here, I came
Up stairs, to pay you, from my very heart,
My tribute of unlimited esteem,
And tell you of my ardent wish, long-cherished,
To be among the number of your friends.
Yes, I 've a heart that loves to honour merit;
I long to see the bonds of friendship join us;
And I believe a zealous friend, and one
Of my condition, can't well be rejected.

(*During this speech, Alceste stands musing, and seems not to notice that Oronte is speaking to him.*)

'T is you, by your good leave, that I 'm addressing.

ALCESTE

I, sir?

ORONTE

Yes, you. I hope I don't offend you.

ALCESTE

By no means. But I 'm very much surprised.
I did not look for such an honour, sir.

ORONTE

My great esteem for you should not surprise you,
For you can claim the like from everyone.

ALCESTE

Sir . . .

ORONTE

Nothing in the state can measure up
To that supreme desert men see in you.

ALCESTE

Sir . . .

ORONTE

Yes, for me, I hold you far above
All that 's most eminent in all the nation.

ALCESTE

Sir . . .

ORONTE

Heaven strike me dead, if I am lying!
And for a present witness of my feelings,
Pray let me, sir, most heartily embrace you,
And ask you for a place among your friends.
Your hand, I beg of you. You promise me
Your friendship?

ALCESTE

Sir . . .

ORONTE

What, you refuse it?

ALCESTE

Sir,
'T is too much honour that you wish to do me.
But friendship needs a touch of mystery,
And asks initiation. We profane
Its name, to drag it in on all occasions.
It springs from mutual knowledge, mutual choice;
Before we form this tie, we need to know
Each other better; we might have such natures
That we should both repent our hasty bargain.

ORONTE

'Pon honour, spoken like a man of sense!
And I esteem you for it all the more.
We 'll let time knit these gentle ties between us;
But meanwhile, I am wholly at your service.
If you need any favour from the court,
'T is known I cut some figure with the king;
I have his ear, and he has always used me,
'Pon honour, like a perfect gentleman.
In short, I 'm yours completely, every way;
And since you 've so much wit, I 've come to show you,
Just to inaugurate our charming friendship,
A sonnet that I wrote not long ago,
And ask you whether I 'd best publish it.

ALCESTE

Sir, I 'm ill fitted to decide such matters;
Pray you, excuse me.

ORONTE

Why?

ALCESTE

I have the fault
Of being more sincere than suits the case.

ORONTE

The very thing I want. Why, you would wrong me
If, when I come for your unfeigned opinion,
You should deceive me, hiding anything.

ALCESTE

Since that is what you wish, sir, I am willing.

ORONTE

SONNET. It is a sonnet. *Hope* . . . It is
A lady who had fanned my flame with hope.
Hope . . . It is none of your grand pompous lines,
But light familiar verse, soft, languishing.

(*At each interruption he looks toward Alceste.*)

ALCESTE

We 'll see, sir.

ORONTE

Hope . . . I don't know if its style
Will seem sufficiently clean-cut and facile,
Or if the choice of words will satisfy you.

ALCESTE

Sir, we shall see.

ORONTE

Besides, I ought to tell you,
It took me but a quarter-hour to write it.

ALCESTE

Out with it, sir. The time can make no odds.

ORONTE, *reading*

Hope, it is true, may bring relief
And rock to sleep awhile our pain;
But, Phyllis, what small gain and brief,
If nothing follow in its train!

PHILINTE

I 'm charmed already with this little taste.

ALCESTE, *aside to Philinte*

What! Can you have the face to call that fine?

ORONTE

You showed me some benevolence,
But should have shown me less, or none,
Nor put yourself to such expense
To give me hope, and hope alone.

PHILINTE

Ah! In what gallant terms these things are phrased!

ALCESTE, *aside to Philinte*

Good heavens! Vile flatterer! You 're praising rubbish.

ORONTE

If I must wait eternally,
Fordone by love, to death I'll fly,
And end my lost endeavour.
Then vain your care, my Phyllis fair;
Hope and despair are one, I swear,
When hope lasts on forever.

PHILINTE

The ending 's pretty, amorous, admirable,
It has a dying fall.

ALCESTE, *aside*

Plague take your fall,
You devil's poison-monger! Would you 'd had
The dying fall yourself!

PHILINTE

I never heard
Lines better turned.

ALCESTE, *aside*

By heaven!

ORONTE

You flatter me
And think, perhaps . . .

PHILINTE

I am not flattering.

ALCESTE, *aside*

What are you doing then, you vile impostor?

ORONTE, *to Alceste*

But you, sir—you remember our agreement.
I pray you speak in all sincerity.

ALCESTE

This is a ticklish subject always, sir;
We 're fond of being flattered for our wit.

But I was saying, just the other day,
To some one—I won't mention any names—
On hearing certain verses he had written,
That any gentleman should always keep
In stern control this writing itch we're seized with;
That he must hold in check the great impatience
We feel to give the world these idle pastimes;
For, through this eagerness to show our works,
'T is likely we shall cut a foolish figure.

ORONTE

And do you mean to intimate by this,
That I am wrong to wish . . . ?

ALCESTE

I don't say that.
But I was telling him, a frigid piece
Of writing, bores to death; and this one weakness
Is quite enough to damn a man, no matter
What sterling qualities he have withal;
For men are judged most often by their foibles.

ORONTE

Then do you think my sonnet bad?

ALCESTE

I don't
Say that. But still, as reason for not writing,
I tried to make him see how, right among us,
This lust for ink has spoiled most worthy men.

ORONTE

Do I write badly then? D' ye mean I 'm like 'em?

ALCESTE

I don't say that. But still (said I to him)
What is your urgent need of making verses?
And who the deuce should drive you into print?
Only poor creatures writing for a living
Can ever be excused for publishing
A wretched book. Come, come, resist temptation,
Conceal this sort of business from the public,
And don't, for anything, go and abandon
Your reputation as a gentleman
To get in place on 't, from a greedy printer
That of ridiculous and wretched scribe.
That 's what I tried to make him understand.

ORONTE

All well and good, sir; and I take your meaning.
But may n't I know what there is, in my sonnet . . .

ALCESTE

Candidly, sir, 't is good . . . good closet-verse.
You have been guided by the worst of models,
And your expressions are not true to nature.
Now what is this: *And rock to sleep our pain?*
Or this: *If nothing follow in its train?*
What means: *Nor put yourself to such expense,*
To give me hope, and hope alone? What sense
Is there in this: *Hope and despair are one*
When hope lasts on—or words to that effect?
This style, full of conceits, that we 're so vain of,
Is far from truth to life and genuineness;
'T is merely play on words, sheer affectation,
And nature speaks far otherwise than so.
The wretched taste of this age makes me shudder;

Rude as they were, our fathers judged far better;
And I esteem all that 's admired to-day
Far less than this old song, which I 'll say over.

If the king had given me
His Paris town so fair,
But to have it I must leave
Loving of my dear, O!
I would say, "King Henry, pray
Take back your Paris fair,
I'd rather have my dearie, O!
I'd rather have my dear."

The rhyme is not exact, the style 's old-fashioned;
But don't you see it 's worth a thousand times
All your new gewgaws that good sense revolts at,
And there true passion speaks its native tongue?

If the king had given me
His Paris town so fair,
But to have it I must leave
Loving of my dear, O!
I would say, "King Henry, pray
Take back your Paris fair,
I'd rather have my dearie, O!
I'd rather have my dear."

That 's what a really loving heart might say.

(*To Philinte, who laughs*)

Yes, Mr. Wag, in spite of all your wits,
I set that far above the flowery fustian
And tinsel stuff that everyone extols.

ORONTE

And I maintain my lines are excellent.

ALCESTE

You have your reasons, sir, for thinking so ;
But you must grant me reasons of my own,
And not expect that mine shall bow to yours.

ORONTE

I 'm satisfied to find that others prize them.

ALCESTE

They have the art of feigning. I have not.

ORONTE

D' ye think you are endowed with all the brains ?

ALCESTE

Did I but praise your rhymes, you 'd grant me more.

ORONTE

I 'll get along quite well without your praise.

ALCESTE

You 'll have to get along without it, please.

ORONTE

I 'd like to have you write, in your own style,
Some verses on the subject, just to see.

ALCESTE

I might, by bad luck, write as wretched ones ;
But I 'd be mighty careful not to show 'em.

ORONTE

You talk most high and mighty ; but your pride . . .

ALCESTE

Go seek your incense-swingers somewhere else.

ORONTE

Come, little sir, don't take such lofty airs.

ALCESTE

Faith, mighty sir, I 'll take what airs I please.

PHILINTE, *stepping between them*

Eh! sirs, you go too far. Let be, I pray you.

ORONTE

I 'm in the wrong, of course; I 'll quit the field.
I am your servant, sir, with all my heart.

ALCESTE

And I, sir, am your most obedient servant.

SCENE III

PHILINTE, ALCESTE

PHILINTE

Well, now you see! For being too sincere,
You 've got an ugly quarrel on your hands;
I saw Oronte, on purpose to be flattered . . .

ALCESTE

Don't speak to me.

PHILINTE

But . . .

ALCESTE

I renounce mankind.

PHILINTE

'T is too much . . .

ALCESTE

Let me be.

PHILINTE

If I . . .

ALCESTE

No talking.

PHILINTE

But what . . . ?

ALCESTE

I 'll hear no more.

PHILINTE

But . . .

ALCESTE

Sir!

PHILINTE

You outrage . .

ALCESTE

Zounds! 't is too much. Don't follow me, I say.

PHILINTE

What nonsense! I sha'n't let you get away.

ACT II

SCENE I

ALCESTE, CELIMENE

ALCESTE

Madam, will you allow me to speak plainly?
I 'm far from satisfied with your behaviour;
It fills my heart with so much bitterness
I feel 'twere better we break off our match;
'T would be deception to speak otherwise;
Sooner or later we must surely break.
Were I to promise you the contrary
A thousand times, I could not keep my word.

CELIMENE

So — 't was to scold at me, apparently,
That you were kind enough to bring me home?

ALCESTE

I am not scolding. But your humour, madam,
Gives any and everyone too easy access
Into your heart. You have too many lovers
Besieging you—a thing I can't endure.

CELIMENE

And must you hold me guilty of my lovers?
How can I hinder men from liking me?

And, when they come to pay me pleasant calls,
Ought I to take a stick and drive them out?

ALCESTE

No stick is needed, madam, but a heart
Less tender and less open to their loves.
I know your charms attend you everywhere;
But those your eyes attract are bound to you
By your kind welcome of them, which completes
The conquest of your beauty o'er their hearts.
The too fond hope you 're always holding out
Binds their attendance to you; somewhat less
Complacence on your part, would drive away
This jostling mob of suitors. Tell me, madam,
By what kind fate Clitandre can have pleased you
So much? On what foundation of sublime
Virtue and merit in him do you base
The honour of your high esteem? Perhaps
'T is the long nail upon his little finger
That won your admiration? Or it may be,
The shining merit of his yellow wig
Quite overcame you, as it did the rest
Of high society? Or his broad ruffs
About the knees, have made you love him? Or
His mass of ribbons charmed you? Or, perhaps,
The vast proportions of his German breeches
Conquered your soul, the while he played your slave?
Or did his laugh, or his falsetto voice,
Find out the secret way of winning you?

CELIMENE

How foolishly you take offence at him!
You know exactly why I treat him kindly;

For he can bring me over all his friends
To help me win my law-suit, as he promised.

ALCESTE

Then lose your law-suit, madam, bravely lose it,
And don't retain a rival I detest.

CELIMENE

But you grow jealous of the universe.

ALCESTE

Because you welcome all the universe.

CELIMENE

This very fact should calm your foolish terrors,
That I treat all with equal graciousness;
You 'd have more cause, by far, to be offended,
Were all my favours heaped on one.

ALCESTE

But, madam,
What have I more than all of them, I pray you?
—I, whom you blame for too much jealousy!

CELIMENE

The happiness of knowing you are loved.

ALCESTE

How can my burning heart be sure of it?

CELIMENE

I think that since I 've taken pains to say so,
Such a confession ought to be sufficient.

ALCESTE

How shall I know you did n't say as much
At the same time, perhaps, to all the others?

CELIMENE

Truly, a gallant lover's compliment!
You make me out a pretty sort of person.
Well, then, to save you such anxiety,
I take back, here and now, all I have said;
Now nothing can deceive you but yourself;
I hope you 're satisfied.

ALCESTE

'Sdeath, must I love you!
Oh, if I could but once get back my heart,
How I 'd bless Heaven for such a rare good fortune!
I strive with all my strength, and don't conceal it,
To break the cruel bonds by which I 'm bound;
Still all my greatest efforts come to nothing;
It must be for my sins I love you so.

CELIMENE

Truly, your passion is unparalleled.

ALCESTE

Yes, on that point I challenge all the world.
My love is inconceivable; be sure
No one has ever loved as I do, madam.

CELIMENE

That 's true, your method is entirely novel,
You love a woman just to quarrel with her;
Only in peevish words you show your passion,
And love was never such a scold before.

ALCESTE

It rests with you to dissipate my anger.
Let us cut short all bickerings, I beg you,
Speak open-heartedly, and put a stop . . .

SCENE II

CELIMENE, ALCESTE, BASQUE

CELIMENE

What is it?

BASQUE

Here 's Acaste.

CELIMENE

Well, show him up.

SCENE III

CELIMENE, ALCESTE

ALCESTE

What! Can I never have you to myself?
You 're always quick to let in everybody,
And can't make up your mind, in all the day,
One moment to deny yourself to people?

CELIMENE

Must I get up a quarrel with him, too?

ALCESTE

You show a deference that I can't endure.

CELIMENE

He is a man who never would forgive me,
If he should learn I did n't want to see him.

ALCESTE

What of it? . . . and why put yourself to trouble . . . ?

CELIMENE

Good lack! From such as he, good-will 's important;
These people somehow have their say at court.
They force themselves on every conversation;
And though they cannot help you, they may harm you;
No matter what support you may have elsewhere,
You must not quarrel with these loud-mouthed gentry.

ALCESTE

In any case, and for whatever reason,
You find some cause to let in everybody;
And your discreet and careful policy . . .

SCENE IV

ALCESTE, CELIMENE, BASQUE

BASQUE

Madam, here is Clitandre as well.

ALCESTE

Precisely.

(*He makes as if to go.*)

CELIMENE

Now what 's this hurry?

ALCESTE

I am going.

CELIMENE

Stay.

ALCESTE

But what for?

CELIMENE

Stay.

ALCESTE

I can't.

CELIMENE

You shall.

ALCESTE

No use.
These conversations only weary me,
It is too much to ask that I endure 'em.

CELIMENE

You shall, you shall.

ALCESTE

No, 't is impossible.

CELIMENE

Well then, begone. Off with you. You 're quite free.

SCENE V

ELIANTE, PHILINTE, ACASTE, CLITANDRE, ALCESTE, CELIMENE, BASQUE

ELIANTE, *to Célimène*

The marquises are coming up with us.
Have they not been announced?

CELIMENE

Yes. (*To Basque*) Chairs for all.
(*Basque places the chairs, and goes out.*)
What! (*To Alceste*) Not gone yet?

ALCESTE

No; but I shall insist
That you declare yourself, for them or me.

CELIMENE

Be still!

ALCESTE

You shall declare yourself, to-day.

CELIMENE

You 've lost your senses.

ALCESTE

No, you shall make known
Your choice.

CELIMENE

So ho!

ALCESTE

You shall decide.

CELIMENE

You 're joking.

ALCESTE

No. You shall choose. I have endured too long.

CLITANDRE

Egad! I 'm just from court. At the levee
Cléonte did prove himself a perfect ass;
Has he no friend who could enlighten him
With charitable comments on his manners?

CELIMENE

'T is true, he cuts a very sorry figure
Before society. He 's always startling;
But when you see him after some brief absence,
You find him more fantastical than ever.

ACASTE

Talk of fantastic characters! Egad!
I 've just encountered one of the most tedious:
Damon, the talker, kept me, by your leave,
Out of my chair, one hour, in the sun.

CELIMENE

He is a marvellous talker—one who finds
The art of saying naught with many words.
You can't make head or tail of his discourse,
And what you listen to is only noise.

ELIANTE, *to Philinte*

Not a bad opening. The conversation
Takes a fine start toward slandering our neighbours.

CLITANDRE

Madam, Timante's another perfect type.

CELIMENE

From head to foot, of mystery compact!
He throws you one wild glance, and hurries by;
And without business, is always busy.
All that he says abounds in affectation;
He wearies you to death with mannerisms;
He interrupts the talk at every moment
To whisper you some secret—which is nothing!
He makes a marvel of the merest trifle,
And even says "Good morning" in your ear.

ACASTE

And Gerald, madam!

CELIMENE

Oh, the boresome boaster!
He stoops to nothing less than lord and lady,
Is always moving in the highest circles,
And never mentions aught but duke or prince.
"The quality" has turned his head; his talk
Is all of horses, carriages, and dogs.
He *thees* and *thous* the men of highest rank,
And just plain *sir* is obsolete with him.

CLITANDRE

They say he 's on the best terms with Bélise.

CELIMENE

The poor in spirit! What dull company!
The days she calls I suffer martyrdom;
I toil and sweat to keep the conversation

Alive, and constantly the barrenness
Of her expression lets it die again.
In vain attack upon her stupid silence
You summon to your aid all commonplaces;
Rain or fine weather, cold, or heat, are soon
Exhausted, yet her visit, bad enough
To start with, still drags on to frightful lengths;
You ask what 't is o'clock, yawn twenty times,
And still she 'll budge no more than any log.

ACASTE

What think you of Adraste?

CELIMENE

Oh! what a pride!
The man is so puffed up with love of self
He ne'er can rest contented with the court,
And makes a daily trade of cursing it,
Because no office, place, or favour 's granted
But what he finds himself unjustly used.

CLITANDRE

But there 's young Cleon; our best sort of people
Frequent his house of late; now what of him?

CELIMENE

He 's made himself a merit of his cook;
And 't is his table people go to call on.

ELIANTE

He takes great care to serve the daintiest dishes.

CELIMENE

Yes; if he only did n't serve himself;
His stupid person is a villainous dish
That spoils, to my taste, all his finest dinners.

PHILINTE

Damis, his uncle, is well thought of, madam;
What say you of him?

CELIMENE

He 's a friend of mine.

PHILINTE

He seems a gentleman, and full of sense.

CELIMENE

Yes; but he 's always trying to be witty,
Which drives me wild; in all his talk, he labours
To be delivered of some brilliant saying.
Since he has taken a notion to be clever,
Nothing can hit his taste, he 's grown so nice.
He needs must censure everything that 's written,
And thinks, to praise does not become a wit,
But to find fault will prove your skill and learning,
And to admire and laugh belongs to fools;
He thinks that by approving nothing new
He sets himself above all other men.
Even in conversations he finds fault;
The talk 's too trivial for his condescension;
With folded arms, he looks in pity down
From heights of wit on everything that 's said.

ACASTE

Damme! That 's just his picture, to the life.

CLITANDRE, *to Célimène*

For drawing portraits, you 're incomparable.

ALCESTE

On! On! Stand firm, thrust hard, my good court-friends;
You give each one his turn, spare none at all;
And yet no one of them could show himself,
But what you 'd rush to meet him, give your hand,
And kiss his cheeks, and swear you were his servants.

CLITANDRE

But why blame us? If what is said offends you,
You must address your censures to the lady.

ALCESTE

No, no! To you. 'T is your approving laughter
That wings these slanderous arrows of her wit.
And her satiric humour feeds upon
The guilty incense of your flatteries;
Her heart would find less charm in raillery
Were she to see it pass without applause.
And so 't is always flatterers we find
To blame for vices spread among mankind.

PHILINTE

But why so earnest in behalf of people
In whom you 'd blame yourself the selfsame faults?

CELIMENE

Must not the gentleman needs contradict?
What! Would you have him think like other people,
And not exhibit, in and out of season,
The spirit of gainsaying he 's endowed with?
Others' opinions are not fit for him,
And he must always hold the opposite,
Because he 'd fear to seem like common mortals,

If he were caught agreeing with anyone.
The glory of contradiction charms him so
He often takes up arms against himself,
And falls to combating his own beliefs
If he but hears them from another's lips.

ALCESTE

You have the laughers, madam, on your side;
That 's saying everything. On with your satire!

PHILINTE

But then, 't is true you 're always up in arms
'Gainst everything that anybody says;
And with ill-humour you admit yourself,
You can't let people either blame or praise.

ALCESTE

Zounds! That 's because they 're always in the wrong,
Because ill-humour always is in season
Against them; for they are, in every case,
Praisers impertinent, or critics pert.

CELIMENE

But . . .

ALCESTE

Madam, no! I say, though I should die for 't,
You have diversions that I can't put up with;
And people here are in the wrong to nourish
Your inclination to the faults they blame.

CLITANDRE

' T is not for me to say; still, I 'll declare
That hitherto I 've found the lady faultless.

ACASTE

I find her full of graces and attractions;
But as for faults, I have n't seen them yet.

ALCESTE

I 've seen them all, and, far from hiding it,
She knows I make a point to tax her with them.
The more we love, the less we ought to flatter;
True love is proven by condoning nothing;
For my part, I would banish those base lovers
I found agreeing with my own opinions,
And pandering with weak obsequiousness
To my vagaries upon all occasions.

CELIMENE

In short, were you to rule men's hearts, they must,
To show true love, renounce all compliments,
And set the high ideal of perfect passion
In railing handsomely at those they love.

ELIANTE

Love is but little subject to such laws,
And lovers always like to vaunt their choice.
Their passion can find naught in her to blame,
For in the loved one, all seems lovable.
They count her faults perfections, and invent
Sweet names to call them by. The pallid maiden
Is like a pure white jasmine flower for fairness;
The frightful dark one is a rich brunette;
The lean one has a figure lithe and free;
The fat one has a fine majestic carriage;
The dowdy, graced with little charm, is called
A careless beauty; and the giantess
Appears a goddess to adoring eyes.

The dwarf is deemed a brief epitome
Of heaven's miracles; the haughty maiden
Is worthy of a crown; the cheat is clever;
The silly dunce, so perfectly good-hearted;
The chatterbox, so pleasantly vivacious;
The silent girl, so modest and retiring.
Thus does a lover, whom true passion fires,
Love even the faults of her whom he admires.

ALCESTE

For my part, I maintain . . .

CELIMENE

Let 's drop this subject,
And walk a little in the gallery.
What! Are you going, gentlemen?

CLITANDRE *and* ACASTE

No, madam.

ALCESTE

You have a mighty fear of their departure.
Go when you please, sirs; but I give you notice
I shall not stir till after you are gone.

ACASTE

Unless my presence prove importunate
There 's nothing calls me elsewhere all day long.

CLITANDRE

If I can wait upon the king at bed time
I have no other business to engage me.

CELIMENE, *to Alceste*

You must be joking, surely.

ALCESTE

Not at all.
We 'll see if I 'm the one you would be rid of.

SCENE IV

ALCESTE, CELIMENE, ELIANTE, ACASTE, PHILINTE, CLITANDRE, BASQUE

BASQUE, *to Alceste*

Sir, there 's a man who wants to speak to you
On business that, he says, can't be put off.

ALCESTE

Tell him I know of no such urgent business.

BASQUE

He 's got a jacket on with plaited coat-tails
And gold all over.

CELIMENE, *to Alceste*

Go see what it is,
Or rather, have him up.

SCENE VII

ALCESTE, CELIMENE, ELIANTE, ACASTE, PHILINTE, CLITANDRE, AN OFFICER from the Marshals' Court

ALCESTE, *stepping forward to meet the officer*

What do you want?
Come in, sir.

THE OFFICER

Sir, I want a word with you.

ALCESTE

Speak out then, sir, and let me know what 't is.

THE OFFICER

The honourable Marshals, whom I serve,
Bid you appear before them, sir, at once.

ALCESTE

Who? I, sir?

THE OFFICER

You.

ALCESTE

And what for, may I ask?

PHILINTE, *to Alceste*

'T is your ridiculous quarrel with Oronte.

CELIMENE, *to Philinte*

What quarrel?

PHILINTE

They had words this morning here
About some trifling lines he did n't like.
The Marshals want to hush things up at once.

ALCESTE

I 'll never stoop to any base compliance.

PHILINTE

You must obey their summons. Come, get ready . . .

ALCESTE

What sort of terms can they arrange between us?
Will they condemn me by a vote to think
The verses good that we disputed over?
I won't take back a single word about them,
I think them wretched.

PHILINTE

But a gentler tone . . .

ALCESTE

I shall not budge an inch; they 're villainous.

PHILINTE

You ought to be the least bit tractable.
Come, come along with me.

ALCESTE

I 'll go, but nothing
Can make me take it back.

PHILINTE

Come show yourself . . .

ALCESTE

Short of a special order from the king
Commanding me to think their plaguy verses
Are good, I shall maintain, by heaven, they 're wretched,
And any man that made them merits hanging.

(*To Clitandre and Acaste, who laugh*)

By God's blood, gentlemen, I did n't know
I was so entertaining.

CELIMENE

Go, go quickly
Where you are summoned.

ALCESTE

Yes, I 'll go; and straight
Be back again to settle our debate.

ACT III

SCENE I

CLITANDRE, ACASTE

CLITANDRE

Dear Marquis, you seem quite self-satisfied;
You 're pleased with everything, annoyed at nothing.
Now tell me truly, are you sure—don't flatter
Yourself—you 've such great reason to be joyous?

ACASTE

Egad now! When I look myself well over,
I can't find any cause for discontent;
I 'm rich, I 'm young, I 'm of a family
That well may give itself the style of noble;
And by the rank which my extraction gives me,
I can lay claim to almost any office.
In courage, which we all must value most,
The world knows (not to boast) that I 'm not lacking;
They 've seen me carry an affair of honour
Quite dashingly and cavalierly through.
With wit, of course, I 'm furnished; and good taste
To judge off-hand, and talk on any subject,
And, when new plays come out (which I adore),
On the stage-seats to act the knowing critic,
Decide the drama's fate, and lead the applause
Whenever a fine passage merits bravos.

I 'm dexterous, handsome, have a good complexion,
Especially fine teeth, a slender figure;
And as for dressing well, I think, without
Conceit, 't were foolish to dispute me that.
I find myself as much esteemed as can be,
Loved by the fair sex, favoured by the king.
And with all this, dear Marquis, I should think
That any man might be self-satisfied.

CLITANDRE

Yes. But, since elsewhere you find easy conquests,
Why waste your sighs upon this lady here?

ACASTE

I? Gad, not I! I 'm not of make or temper
To bear a fair one's coldness. Let the common
And awkward fellows burn with constancy
For frigid beauties, languish at their feet,
Bear their rebuffs, seek help in sighs and tears,
And try, by long continuance of service,
To win what is denied their scanty merit.
But men like me, dear Marquis, are not made
To love on credit and pay all expenses.
However rare may be the ladies' merits
I think that I 'm as good as they, thank Heaven;
That to be honoured with a heart like mine,
Should not, in any reason, cost them nothing;
And that the least a man like me can ask,
To make things fair, is meeting him half-way.

CLITANDRE

You think then, Marquis, you 're in favour here?

ACASTE

I have some reason, Marquis, so to think.

CLITANDRE

Trust me, divest yourself of that delusion;
Dear fellow, you deceive and blind yourself.

ACASTE

Quite true, I do deceive and blind myself.

CLITANDRE

What makes you think your happiness so perfect?

ACASTE

I do deceive myself.

CLITANDRE

Upon what grounds . . . ?

ACASTE

I blind myself.

CLITANDRE

Have you trustworthy proofs?

ACASTE

I fool myself, I say.

CLITANDRE

Can Célimène
Have secretly avowed some love for you?

ACASTE

No, I 'm ill-used.

CLITANDRE

But answer me, I beg you.

ACASTE

I meet with nothing but rebuffs.

CLITANDRE

Have done
With jesting; say what hope she 's given you.

ACASTE

I am the luckless one, and you the lucky.
She feels for me a horrible aversion,
And one of these days I must hang myself.

CLITANDRE

Come, Marquis, let 's arrange our love-affairs,
Will you, by both agreeing on one thing—
If either of us show convincing proof
That he 's preferred by Célimène, the other
Shall give a clear field to the future victor
And free him from assiduous rivalry?

ACASTE

Egad! I swear I like your proposition,
And I agree with all my heart. But hush . . .

SCENE II

CELIMENE, ACASTE, CLITANDRE

CELIMENE

Still here?

CLITANDRE

Love stays our steps.

CELIMENE

I heard just now
A carriage driving in. Who can it be?

SCENE III

CELIMENE, ACASTE, CLITANDRE, BASQUE

BASQUE

Arsinoé is coming up to see you,
Madam.

CELIMENE

What can the woman want with me?

BASQUE

She 's talking now to Eliante, downstairs.

CELIMENE

What is she thinking of? What brings her here?

ACASTE

She everywhere is called a perfect prude;
Her zealous ardour . . .

CELIMENE

Yes, yes, all put on.
At heart she 's of the world, and does her utmost
To hook some man, and yet she can't succeed.
So she can only look with eyes of envy
Upon another woman's train of suitors;
Her sorry charms, in their abandonment,
Are always railing at our age's blindness.
She 'd like to hide, under sham prudery,
The frightful solitude that 's seen about her;
To save the credit of her feeble charms,
She makes a crime of every power they lack.
The lady, all the same, would like a lover,

And even has a weakness for Alceste.
The court he pays to me insults her beauty;
She claims that I have stolen him from her;
And in her jealous spite, but ill concealed,
She secretly attacks me everywhere.
I 've never in my life seen such an idiot;
Her conduct is the height of silly malice,
And . . .

SCENE IV

ARSINOE, CELIMENE, CLITANDRE, ACASTE

CELIMENE

Oh! What lucky chance has brought you here?
In truth I was right anxious for you, madam.

ARSINOE

I 've come to speak of something that I thought
I ought to . . .

CELIMENE

Dear! How glad I am to see you!

(*Clitandre and Acaste go out laughing.*)

SCENE V

ARSINOE, CELIMENE

ARSINOE

Their going away was certainly most timely.

CELIMENE

Shall we sit down?

ARSINOE

It is not necessary.
Friendship ought most to show itself, dear madam,
In things that are of most importance to us;
And since there 's none of greater import, surely,
Than what concerns propriety and honour,
I 've come to prove my heart-felt love for you,
By telling you of something that involves
Your honour. Yesterday I called upon
Some very virtuous friends of mine; and there
The talk was all of you; your conduct, madam,
That wins you so much notoriety,
Had the misfortune not to be commended.
This motley crowd whose visits you encourage,
Your love-affairs, the rumours they give rise to,
Had censors far more numerous and harsh
Than I could wish. Of course, you well may know
Which side I took; how I did all I could
To clear you; swore you really *meant* no harm
And said I 'd vouch for it your *heart* was right.
But still, you know there are some things in life
One can't defend, however much one wants to;
And so I found myself compelled to grant
Your way of living was somewhat against you;
That to the world it had an ugly look;
That everywhere it makes all sorts of talk,
And that your conduct might, if you but chose,
Give far less reason for censorious judgment.
Not that I think you 've really failed in virtue;
Heaven preserve me from that thought, at least!
But still, the mere appearances of evil
Are quickly credited; 't is not enough
To live uprightly for ourselves alone.

I hope you have too sensible a spirit,
Madam, to take amiss this useful warning,
Or think it due to any other motive
Than my concern for all that touches you.

CELIMENE

Madam, I owe you many thanks. This warning
Has put me deeply in your debt; so far
From taking it amiss, I shall insist
Upon repaying it at once in kind
By giving you a warning which concerns
Your honour. Since you prove yourself my friend
By telling me the common talk about me,
I 'll follow, in my turn, this good example,
By telling you what people say of you.
Where I was visiting the other day,
I met some people of especial merit,
Who, in discussing true ideals of virtue,
Turned their remarks upon your character,
Dear madam. But your prudery and fervour
Were not regarded as the best of models;
Your false assumption of a grave demeanour,
Your endless talk of virtue and of honour,
Your mincings and your mouthings at the shadow
Of coarseness that some doubtful word may have,
The high esteem in which you hold yourself
And pitying glances that you cast on others,
Your constant preaching, and your acrid judgments
On things quite innocent and honourable:
All this, to be quite frank with you, dear madam,
Was blamed with one accord. What is the good,
They said, of all this outward show of virtue
And modesty, when all the rest belies it?

She 's punctual at her prayers, to a degree,
But beats her servants, and won't pay their wages.
At public worship she displays great fervour,
But paints herself, and tries to play the beauty.
She has the nude in pictures covered up,
But the reality, meanwhile, she likes.
I took your part against them, one and all,
Assuring them that this was calumny;
But their opinions all combined against me,
And their conclusion was, that you 'd do well
To meddle less with other people's conduct,
And look a bit more closely to your own;
That we should scrutinise ourselves no little
Before assuming to condemn our neighbours,
And add the weight of exemplary living
To any censure that we pass on others;
And even so, if needful, we should leave it,
To those whom Heaven appoints to judge such matters.
I hope you likewise are too sensible,
Madam, to take amiss this useful warning,
Or think it due to any other motive
Than my concern for all that touches you.

ARSINOE

Whatever risk we run in our reproofs,
I did not, madam, look for this retort;
And I see plainly, by its bitterness,
That my frank warning cut you to the quick.

CELIMENE

No! Say it pleased me, rather. Were folk wise
Such mutual warnings would become the fashion.

Given in good faith, they 'd soon dispel that blindness
Most of us suffer as regards ourselves.
'T will be your fault if we should not continue
This faithful service with unbated zeal,
And take pains privately to tell each other
What you may hear of me, and I of you.

ARSINOE

Ah! madam, I can hear no ill of you;
It is in me that everything 's to blame.

CELIMENE

Everything, madam, may be praised or blamed,
And each is right, in proper time and season.
There is an age for love-affairs, methinks,
And there 's an age that 's fit for prudery.
It may be policy to choose the second
When youth is gone and all its glamour faded,
For that may serve to hide a sorry downfall.
Perhaps some day I 'll follow in your footsteps,
For age brings everything; but 't is not time,
As all men know, to be a prude at twenty.

ARSINOE

You plume yourself upon a slight advantage,
And make a frightful noise about your age.
The trifling difference between yours and mine
Is no such mighty matter to be proud of,
And I can't see why you 're so angry, madam,
And fall upon me in such bitter fashion.

CELIMENE

I, madam, likewise cannot see just why
You should let loose against me everywhere.

Must I be blamed for all your disappointments,
And can I help it if the men won't court you?
If they love me, and will persist in paying
To me addresses that you 'd rather have,
Why, I can't help it, and it 's not my fault;
The field is free for you, and I don't hinder
Your having charms to win them, if you can.

ARSINOE

Good lack! D' ye think that anyone 's concerned
About the mob of lovers you 're so vain of,
Or that we cannot easily infer
What price is paid to get 'em now-a-days?
D' ye hope, the way things go, to make us think
Your simple merit draws this motley crowd?
That they 're inflamed with honourable passion,
And that they court you only for your virtues?
No one is blinded by such vain pretences;
The world 's no dupe. I know some women, too,
With charms to kindle tender sentiments,
Who don't have lovers always dangling round 'em;
Whereby we may infer that they 're not won
Without some great advances on our part;
That men don't woo us just to look at us,
And all the court they pay is dearly bought.
Then don't be so puffed up with boastful pride
For the cheap tinsel of a paltry triumph;
Don't let your beauty be so self-conceited,
And for so little treat folk haughtily.
For if my charms could envy yours their conquests,
Why, I might do as others do, methinks,
And prove, by being lavish of myself,
That one has lovers if one wants to have 'em.

CELIMENE

Then have 'em, madam; let us see it done.
Try if by this rare secret you can please;
And don't . . .

ARSINOE

Let 's end this conversation, madam,
'T will carry us too far; I should have taken
My leave already, as I ought to do,
If I were n't forced to wait here for my carriage.

CELIMENE

Stay just as long as suits you, madam. Nothing
Need hurry you. But not to weary you
With my attentions, here 's a gentleman,
Most opportunely come, to take my place
And give you better company than I can.

SCENE VI

CELIMENE, ARSINOE, ALCESTE

CELIMENE

Alceste, I must go write a line or two;
I can't defer it without serious loss.
Please stay with madam; she will be so kind
As gladly to excuse my impoliteness.

SCENE VII

ALCESTE, ARSINOE

ARSINOE

You see she wishes me to talk with you

Just for a moment, till my carriage comes;
Her hospitality could offer nothing
More charming to me than such conversation.
People of lofty merit needs must win
Esteem and love from everyone; your worth
Has some especial charm to make my heart
Espouse your interests in every way.
I wish the court would cast an eye of favour
On you, and do more justice to your merits.
You 've reason to complain; I 'm out of patience
To see them day by day do nothing for you.

ALCESTE

Me, madam! Pray what claim have I upon them?
What service have I rendered to the state?
What brilliant deeds have I achieved to give me
Cause for complaint that they do nothing for me?

ARSINOE

Not all those whom the court delights to honour
Have always done such signal services.
The opportunity as well as power
Is needed; and the merit that you show
Ought . . .

ALCESTE

Heavens! I beg you, let my merit be;
How can the court be bothered about that?
'T would have its hands too full, if it attempted
To bring to light the worth of everybody.

ARSINOE

But brilliant worth will bring itself to light.
Yours is esteemed by many, and most highly;

Why, I could mention two distinguished houses
Where men of weight extolled you yesterday.

ALCESTE

Eh! madam, now-a-days all men are praised;
The present age has no distinctions left,
And all is equally of dazzling merit;
There is no honour brought you by such praise,
Flung at your head, stuffed down your throat; I see
My valet 's praised too, in the Court Gazette!

ARSINOE

For my part, I could wish, to prove your worth,
Some court employment might appeal to you.
If you 'll but show the least desire for it,
We 'll straightway set intrigues at work to serve you;
I 've persons at my beck and call, to help you
And make the pathway smooth to all preferment.

ALCESTE

Madam, what would you have me do at court?
My character demands I keep away,
For heaven did not give me, at my birth,
A soul congenial to court atmosphere.
I know I don't possess the talents needful
To win success, and make my fortune there.
A frank sincerity is my chief merit,
I 've not the skill to hoodwink men with words,
And anyone who lacks the gift of hiding
His thoughts, should make brief stay in such a country.
Away from court, 't is true, we 've not that standing
Or honourable rank which it bestows;
But still, for compensation, we escape
Having to play the part of silly fools,

To bear a thousand pitiless rebuffs,
To laud the rhymes of Mr. So-and-So,
Burn incense at the shrine of Madam Blank,
And bear the shallow wit of hare-brained lordlings.

ARSINOE

Then let us drop this matter of the court,
Since you prefer it; but my heart is moved
To pity by your love-affair. To tell you
Just what I think about it, I could wish
Your passion were more fittingly bestowed.
You certainly deserve a kinder fate,
For she who charms you is unworthy of you.

ALCESTE

Madam, in saying this, do you remember,
I pray you, that this person is your friend?

ARSINOE

Yes. But it really goes against my conscience
Longer to bear the wrong that 's being done you.
The state I see you in afflicts my soul
Too much. I warn you that your love 's betrayed.

ALCESTE

Madam, you 're showing much concern for me;
Such news is always welcome to a lover!

ARSINOE

Yes, though my friend, she is, and I declare her,
Unworthy to enthrall a true man's heart;
And her affection for you is a sham.

ALCESTE

That 's possible; we can't see people's hearts;
But still, in charity you might refrain,
Madam, from raising such a doubt in mine.

ARSINOE

If you prefer not to be undeceived,
I 'll say no more to you; that 's easy enough.

ALCESTE

In such a case, whatever we may learn,
Doubts are more torturing than any truth;
And I had rather I were told of nothing
Except what can be proved with certainty.

ARSINOE

That 's right enough; and on this present matter
You shall receive complete enlightenment.
I 'll let your own eyes prove it all to you.
Only escort me home, and there I 'll show you
A faithful proof of her unfaithfulness;
And if your heart can love another fair,
Perhaps you 'll find your consolation there.

ACT IV

SCENE I

ELIANTE, PHILINTE

PHILINTE

Never was seen a man so hard to manage,
Or compromise so difficult to make;
In vain they tried to move him every way,
They could n't drag him from his fixed opinion;
And never did so strange an altercation,
Methinks, employ the wisdom of the Marshals.
"No, gentlemen," he said, "I 'll not retract;
I will agree to all you please, except
This one point. What is he offended at?
What does he want of me? Does it reflect
Upon his honour, if he can't write well?
What odds to him is my opinion, which
He took so much amiss; a man may be
A perfect gentleman, and write poor verse.
These matters do not raise the point of honour.
I hold him a true man in all respects,
Brave, worthy, noble, anything you will,
But still, a wretched writer. I will praise,
If you desire, his lavish style of living,
His skill in horsemanship, in arms, in dancing;
But for his verse, I beg to be excused;

And if a man has not the luck to write
Better than that, he ought to give up rhyming,
Unless condemned to it on pain of death."
In short, the only favour or concession
He could with effort bring himself to grant,
Was saying (as he thought, in gentler style):
"I 'm sorry, sir, that I 'm so hard to please,
And for your sake I wish with all my heart
I could have liked your recent sonnet better."
Whereon the Marshals forced them to embrace,
And hastily hushed up the whole affair.

ELIANTE

His ways are very strange; yet I must own
That I esteem him above other men;
And this sincerity he makes a point of
Has something noble and heroic in it.
'T is a rare virtue now-a-days. I wish
That everyone took pattern after him.

PHILINTE

The more I see of him, the more amazed
I am to see this passion he 's enslaved to.
With such a character as heaven gave him,
I don't know how he ever came to love
At all; and even less how it could be
Your cousin that his fancy fixed upon.

ELIANTE

This only goes to show love does n't always
Depend on harmony of humours; all
Their theories of sympathetic souls
Are pretty, but the present case belies them.

PHILINTE

But do you think he 's loved, from what we see?

ELIANTE

That is a point not easy to determine.
Does she love him or not?—how can we judge,
When her own heart 's not sure of what it feels?
She loves sometimes without quite knowing it,
And thinks she loves, too, sometimes, when she does n't.

PHILINTE

I think our friend is very like to have
More trouble than he looks for, with your cousin;
And, to be frank, if he but felt as I do,
He 'd look in quite a different direction,
And by a fitter choice would take advantage,
Madam, of that kind favour you accord him.

ELIANTE

For my part, I don't try to hide my feelings,
And think, in such things, we should be straightforward.
I don't oppose his ardent love for her,
But rather do my best to forward it;
And if the matter could depend on me,
I should unite him with the one he loves.
But if (since anything is possible)
The fates should thwart him in his choice, and if
Another's love be crowned with more success,
I could be glad, then, to receive his homage;
His having been refused, in such a case,
Would cause me no aversion.

PHILINTE

For my part,
I likewise don't oppose your kindness, madam,
For him; and he can tell you, if he will,
What I have said to him upon that point.
But if their marriage once for all prevented
His suit to you, then I should do my utmost
To win that favour which your generous heart
Now grants to him; and count myself most happy
If what he misses might descend to me.

ELIANTE

Philinte, you 're jesting.

PHILINTE

Madam, I am speaking
Now from my inmost heart. I wait the chance
To make this offer unreservedly,
And all my hopes are eager for that moment.

SCENE II

ALCESTE, ELIANTE, PHILINTE

ALCESTE

Ah! madam, help me to avenge a crime
That triumphs over all my strength of soul.

ELIANTE

What is the matter? What can move you so?

ALCESTE

The matter is . . . 't is death to think upon it! . . .

Complete upheaval of the universe
Could not o'erwhelm me more than this disaster.
All 's over with . . . My love . . . I cannot speak.

ELIANTE

Try to control yourself somewhat.

ALCESTE

Just heaven!
How can so many graces be united
With hateful vices of the basest nature!

ELIANTE

But tell us, what can make you . . . ?

ALCESTE

All is ruined.
I am betrayed, destroyed, stricken to death,
For Célimène—ah! who could have believed it?—
For Célimène deceives me; she is faithless.

ELIANTE

Have you sufficient grounds for that belief?

PHILINTE

Perhaps you are too hastily suspicious;
Your jealous temper sometimes takes chimeras
For . . .

ALCESTE

'Sdeath! Mind your own business, will you, sir?

(*To Eliante*)

I 'm all too certain of her treason, madam,
Having it written down in her own hand.

Yes, here 's a letter to Oronte, disclosing
Her shame and my misfortune ; to Oronte,
Whose suit I thought she scorned, and whom I feared
The least of all my rivals.

PHILINTE

Letters, sometimes,
Are not so guilty as they may appear.

ALCESTE

Once more, sir, will you please let me alone,
And pay attention to your own concerns ?

ELIANTE

You ought to calm yourself. The outrage . . .

ALCESTE

Madam,
This rests with you. To you I have recourse
For power to free my heart from galling anguish.
Avenge me on your false ungrateful cousin
Who basely has betrayed my constant love
By such a deed as must arouse your horror.

ELIANTE

Avenge you ? I ? But how ?

ALCESTE

Accept my heart.
Accept it, in that faithless woman's place ;
Only in that way can I be avenged ;
I 'll punish her by the sincere attachment,
Profound affection, worshipful attentions,
Eager devotion, and assiduous service,
My heart will henceforth offer at your shrine.

ELIANTE

I truly sympathise with what you suffer,
And don't despise the heart you offer me;
But still, perhaps the harm is not so great,
And you may yet give up this wish for vengeance.
For when a charming woman wrongs a man,
He forms a hundred plans, but acts on none;
In vain is even the strongest argument,
A guilty loved one soon seems innocent;
The wish to harm her quickly disappears,
And lover's wrath—we all know how it wears.

ALCESTE

No, madam, no. I 'm mortally offended.
There 's no relenting. I have done with her.
Nothing can change my settled resolution;
If I could love her still, I 'd hate myself.
But here she comes. My anger is redoubled
At sight of her. I 'll taunt her with her treason,
Confound her utterly, then bring to you
A heart quite freed from her delusive charms.

SCENE III

CELIMENE, ALCESTE

ALCESTE, *aside*

O heaven! Can I be master of my passion?

CELIMENE, *aside*

So ho!

(*To Alceste*)

Well, what 's the matter with you now?

And what 's the meaning of your deep-drawn sighs,
And those black looks you cast in my direction?

ALCESTE

That all the horrors which a heart can hold
Have nothing to compare with your dishonour;
That fate and devils and the wrath of heaven
Never produced a creature so perverse.

CELIMENE

A pretty compliment. I like it vastly.

ALCESTE

Have done with joking. 'T is no time for laughter.
Far rather blush, for you have reason to;
I have full proof here of your perfidy.
'T was this that my presentiments foretold;
Not without reason was my love alarmed,
And through those many doubts that you called hateful
My soul foresaw the truth my eyes have found.
In spite of all your care and clever feigning,
My star predicted what I had to fear.
But do not hope I 'll suffer unavenged
The sting of such a wrong. 'T is true, I know,
That will has no control of our affections,
That love must always come spontaneously,
That never any heart was won by force,
And every soul is free to name its master.
So I could find no reason for complaint
If you had treated me without deceit;
And though you had repulsed me from the first
I could have quarrelled only with my fate.
But to lead on my heart by false avowals,

Why, that is treason, that is perfidy
For which no punishment can be too great;
And I may give free rein to my resentment.
Yes, fear the worst, after such infamy;
I am beside myself, I am all rage.
Pierced by the deadly blow which you have struck,
My reason can no longer rule my senses;
I yield to impulses of righteous anger,
And will not answer for the things I do.

CELIMENE

But tell me, whence comes this excess of passion?
Have you quite lost your senses, pray?

ALCESTE

Yes, yes,
I lost them, when I sucked the murderous poison
Of my misfortune from the sight of you,
And thought to find some slight sincerity
In those deceitful charms that so bewitched me.

CELIMENE

Come now, what perfidy can you complain of?

ALCESTE

How false your heart, how skilled in arts of feigning!
But I have proofs to force its last defence.
Look here, and recognise your character;
This letter is sufficient to convict you,
And there can be no answer made to this.

CELIMENE

So that 's the thing you 're so worked up about.

ALCESTE

What! Don't you blush to see this piece of writing?

CELIMENE

And why, pray, should I blush at sight of it?

ALCESTE

What! Add audacity to artifice!
Will you disown it for not being signed?

CELIMENE

But why disown a letter that I wrote?

ALCESTE

And you can look on it without confusion
To see the crime toward me it brands you with!

CELIMENE

You are in truth a most fantastic fellow.

ALCESTE

What! You outbrave unanswerable proof?
The love shown in this letter for Oronte
Does not wrong me, or cover you with shame?

CELIMENE

Oronte! Who says the letter is to him?

ALCESTE

Why, those who put it in my hands just now.
But granting it was written to another,
Have I less reason to complain of you?
Are you less culpable toward me for that?

CELIMENE

But if this note was written to a woman,
In what can it offend you? Where 's the guilt?

ALCESTE

Ah! 't is a clever turn, a fine evasion.
I 'll own I did n't look for such a shift,
And I am quite convinced by it, of course.
How dare you seek such palpable devices?
Or do you think me quite devoid of sense?
Come, show me by what trick, and with what face,
You can maintain so evident a lie;
How you will twist to suit them to a woman
All the expressions of this passionate letter?
Interpret now, to hide your faithlessness,
What I shall read . . .

CELIMENE

Not I; I do not care to.
You 're foolish, to assume such domination,
And say the things you dare to, to my face.

ALCESTE

No, no; now don't get angry; try a little
To justify these words here.

CELIMENE

No, I will not.
What you may think of it is nothing to me.

ALCESTE

But I beseech you, show me how this letter
Can fit a woman, and I 'll be content.

CELIMENE

No, it is to Oronte. I 'll have you think so.
I welcome his attentions joyfully,
Admire his talk, esteem his character,
And will confess to everything you please.
Go on, do what you choose, let nothing stop you,
But don't vex me about it any more.

ALCESTE, *aside*

Good heavens! Can anything be found more cruel?
Was ever heart so treated? What! I come
All hot with righteous anger, to complain
Of her, and find myself the one that 's blamed!
My griefs and doubts are goaded to the utmost,
She bids me think the worst, and glories in it;
And yet my heart is still so base and weak
It cannot break the chains that bind me to her,
Nor arm itself with noble scorn, against
The ungrateful object of a love too fond!

(*To Célimène*)

How skilled you are to turn against me now,
Traitress, the weapon of my utter weakness,
And use to your own ends the strange excess
Of fated love sprung from your fickle beauty.
Defend yourself, I beg you, from a crime
That crushes me; do not pretend you 're guilty,
But show this letter innocent, if you can.
My love consents to help you; try to seem
Faithful, and I will try to think you so.

CELIMENE

Fie, fie, you 're mad, with all your jealous frenzies,
And don't deserve the love that 's given you.

I 'd like to know what ever could compel me
To stoop on your account to base dissembling?
Or why, if my heart leaned another way,
I should n't say so with sincerity?
What! Does the kind assurance of my feelings
Not come to my defence against your doubts?
Compared with such a pledge, are they of weight?
Do you not outrage me by heeding them?
And since it costs a woman such great effort
To own her love, and since our sex's honour,
A foe to love, opposes such avowals,
May any lover doubt the oracle
When for his sake we overpass those bounds?
Is he not guilty if he does not trust
What 's never said without a mighty struggle?
Fie on you, doubts like these deserve my anger.
You are not worth the least consideration.
I am a fool, and vexed at my own folly
In still retaining any kindness toward you;
I ought to fix my love on someone else,
And give you reason for a just complaint.

ALCESTE

How strange my weakness for you is! No doubt
You are deceiving me with tender words;
No matter; I must undergo my fate;
My soul is wholly given to love of you;
And I must see, even to the bitter end,
What your heart is, and whether 't will betray me.

CELIMENE

No, you don't love me as one ought to love.

ALCESTE

Nothing can match the greatness of my love.
In its excess of zeal it goes so far
As even to wish you harm; yes, I could wish
That no one ever thought you lovable,
That you were forced to live in misery,
That heaven at your birth had given you nothing,
And that you had no wealth or rank or station,
If so my heart, by free and full devotion,
Might make amends to you for fate's injustice,
And I might have the joy and glory, then,
Of seeing you owe all to my affection.

CELIMENE

That 's a strange way of caring for me! Heaven
Forbid your ever having cause . . . but here
Is your Du Bois, and strange enough he looks!

SCENE IV

CELIMENE, ALCESTE, DU BOIS

ALCESTE

What means this plight you 're in, this frightened air?
What is it?

DU BOIS

Sir . . .

ALCESTE

Well?

DU BOIS

Here 's strange things have happened.

ALCESTE

Well, what?

DU BOIS

We are bad off, sir, very bad.

ALCESTE

How?

DU BOIS

Shall I speak right out?

ALCESTE

Yes, speak, and quickly.

DU BOIS

There 's no one here who 'll . . . ?

ALCESTE

Ah! what dallying!
Speak, will you?

DU BOIS

Sir, we 've got to get away.

ALCESTE

What 's that?

DU BOIS

We must decamp, and make no noise.

ALCESTE

But why?

DU BOIS

I tell you we must leave this place.

ALCESTE

What for?

DU BOIS

And never stop to say good-bye.

ALCESTE

But what 's the cause, the cause, of what you tell me?

DU BOIS

The cause, the cause, sir, is, we must be packing.

ALCESTE

Ah! I shall break your head, beyond a doubt,
You booby, if you do not change your style.

DU BOIS

Sir, a man dressed in black, with blacker looks,
Came right into the kitchen, sir, and left us
A paper all so scribbled over, sir,
A man would have to be the very devil,
To read the thing. I make no sort of doubt
But it 's about your law-suit; still, old Nick
Himself could not make head or tail of it.

ALCESTE

Well, well, what then? What has this scrawl to do,
You rascal, with our sudden forced departure?

DU BOIS

I 'm here to tell you, sir, an hour later
A man who often pays you visits, came

To look for you, and in a hurry too;
And when he could n't find you, asked me kindly—
Because he knows I am your faithful servant—
To tell you . . . wait a bit . . . what *is* his name . . . ?

ALCESTE

Rogue! Never mind his name; say what he told you!

DU BOIS

Well, he 's a friend of yours, and that 's enough.
He told me you must leave here, for your life,
And that you 're liable to be arrested.

ALCESTE

But why? He told you nothing definite?

DU BOIS

No. But he asked for ink and paper then
And wrote a word by which you can, I think,
Get at the bottom of this mystery.

ALCESTE

Then give it to me.

CELIMENE

What can this portend?

ALCESTE

I don't know; but I mean to clear it up.
Will you not soon have done, you devil's limb?

DU BOIS, *after having fumbled about for the note a long time*

Faith, sir, I 've left it, sir, upon your table.

ALCESTE

I don't know what restrains me . . .

CELIMENE

Keep your temper,
And go unravel this perplexing business.

ALCESTE

It seems that Fate, in spite of all I do,
Has sworn to interrupt my talk with you ;
But, madam, help me baffle Fate, I pray,
And let me see you yet again to-day.

ACT V

SCENE I

ALCESTE, PHILINTE

ALCESTE

My mind 's made up, I say.

PHILINTE

But must this blow,
However hard it seem, compel you to . . .

ALCESTE

No matter what you do or what you say,
Nothing can move me from my settled purpose;
The age we 're living in is so depraved
That I must shun all intercourse with men.
What! Honour, justice, decency, the laws,
Are all combined against my adversary;
My rights are everywhere proclaimed; I rest
Assured upon the justice of my cause;
And yet I'm disappointed by the outcome;
With justice on my side, I lose my case!
A knave, whose story is a public scandal,
Comes off triumphant in his treachery,
And honest truth must yield to blackguardism!

He cuts my throat, and proves he 's doing right!
That grinning face, in which his cant and cunning[1]
Show clearly forth, has influence enough
To overthrow the right and ruin justice!
He gets decree of court to crown his crime!
Then, not contented with the wrong he 's done me,
Finding a villainous book in circulation,
A book deserving of the utmost censure,
And which it is disgraceful even to read,
The scoundrel has the face to say I wrote it!
And thereupon Oronte begins to mutter,
And basely tries to spread the lie! . . . Oronte
Who has the standing of a gentleman
At court, and whom I never wronged, unless
By being frank and honest, when he came
With ardent eagerness, against my will,
To ask my judgment on some rhymes he 'd written!
Because I treat him like an honest man
And won't betray the truth or him, he helps
To overwhelm me with a trumped-up crime!
Now he 's become my greatest enemy,
And never will be brought to pardon me,
All just because I did n't praise his sonnet!
And men, good heavens, are made of stuff like this!
These are the deeds their pride can bring them to!
This is the honesty, the love of virtue,
The justice, and the honour, found among 'em!
I 've borne the plague of 'em too long; I 'll leave

[1] Alceste's adversary in his suit is perhaps none other than Tartuffe. The description of him, both here and in Act I., seems to fit that character. It is also stated by Grimarest in his *Life of Molière* (not a very good authority, to be sure) that the "villainous book" alluded to a few lines farther on had been put in circulation, and attributed to Molière, by the "cabal" which opposed the production of *Tartuffe*.

This savage ambuscade and cut-throat hole;
And since among mankind you live like wolves,
You 'll never see me more in all your days.

PHILINTE

Your plan, methinks, is just a little hasty;
The mischief 's not so great as you make out.
Your adversary's impudent accusation
Has not caused your arrest—'t is not believed in;
We find his false report defeats itself,
And such an action well may do him harm.

ALCESTE

Do *him* harm! He that 's known for scurvy tricks
Need fear no scandal. He 's a licensed scoundrel,
And far from being harmed by this affair,
To-morrow he 'll be found in higher credit.

PHILINTE

In any case 't is certain few are fooled
By this report his malice spread against you,
And on that score you have no more to fear;
As for your law-suit, which you may complain of
With justice, you can easily appeal
And have this sentence . . .

ALCESTE

No, I 'll hold by it.
However great the wrong this verdict does me,
I 'll take good care it shan't be set aside;
It is so clear a case of justice wronged,
I 'll hand it down to future generations
As signal proof and unsurpassed example
Of what men's villainy could be to-day.

The thing may cost me twenty thousand francs,
But for my twenty thousand francs I 'll have
The right to rail against the wickedness
Of human nature, and forever hate it.

PHILINTE

But after all . . .

ALCESTE

But after all, your trouble
Is wasted, sir; what can you find to say
About it? Will you have the impudence
To palliate these constant infamies?

PHILINTE

No, I agree to anything you please.
Intrigue and selfish motives govern all,
Deceit wins every battle now-a-days,
And men should be quite other than they are.
But is their lack of righteousness a reason
To shun the world? These faults of human nature
But give us opportunities in life
To put in practice our philosophy;
This is the best employment virtue finds;
If everything were clothed in probity,
If all men's hearts were open, just, and gentle,
Most of our virtues would be wholly useless,
Since we employ them now, in cheerfully
Enduring wrong, with right upon our side;
And just as any heart of genuine virtue . . .

ALCESTE

I know, sir, you 're a mighty fluent talker,
Always abounding in fine arguments;
Still, you waste time, and all your dapper speeches.

Reason demands, for my own good, that I
Should quit the world ; I can't control my tongue
Enough, nor answer for the things I 'd say.
I 'd have a hundred duels on my hands.
So let me wait in peace for Célimène;
She must accept the plan that brings me here ;
I 'll learn in that way if she really loves me,
And here and now she must convince me of it.

PHILINTE

Let 's go see Eliante, until she comes.

ALCESTE

No, no, my heart 's too full of care. You go
Up stairs to her, and leave me here alone
In this dark corner, with my black chagrin.

PHILINTE

Strange company that is, and too austere
To wait with ! I 'll bring Eliante down here.

SCENE II

CELIMENE, ORONTE, ALCESTE

ORONTE

Yes, 't is for you to say, if ties so dear,
Madam, shall make me wholly yours forever.
I must have full assurance of your heart ;
A lover does not like these waverings ;
And if my ardent love has power to move you,
You should not hesitate to prove it to me ;
And after all, the only proof I ask
Is, no more to admit Alceste's addresses,

To sacrifice him, madam, to my love,
And shut your door against him from this day.

CELIMENE

But why are you, whom I have heard so often
Lauding his merit, angry with him now?

ORONTE

There 's no need, madam, of these explanations.
The point is, what are your own sentiments?
Choose, if you please, the one you wish to keep;
My own decision only waits on yours.

ALCESTE, *coming out of the corner to which he had withdrawn*

Yes, madam, he is right, it 's time to choose,
And his demand agrees with my desire.
The same impatience brings me here, the same
Intention; and my love demands of you
Some certain proof. Things can't drag on forever.
Now is the moment to declare your heart.

ORONTE

Sir, not for anything would I disturb
Your happy fortune by an ill-timed wooing.

ALCESTE

Sir, not for anything—jealous or not—
Would I consent to share her heart with you.

ORONTE

If she can possibly prefer your love . . .

ALCESTE

If she can feel for you the slightest leaning . . .

ORONTE

I swear she 'll have no more of my addresses.

ALCESTE

I swear I 'll ne'er set eyes on her again.

ORONTE

Now, madam, you may speak, without restraint.

ALCESTE

Now, madam, you may choose, and have no fear.

ORONTE

You only need to tell us which you love.

ALCESTE

You only need to say the word, and choose.

ORONTE

What! Can you seem to balk at such a choice!

ALCESTE

What! Can you waver and appear uncertain!

CELIMENE

Good heavens! How out of place is this insistence!
How little sense does either of you show!
'T is not but what I know which one to choose;
Of course I could not hold my heart suspended
Upon the scales, in doubt between you two;
No choice is quicker made than that of love;
But still, the truth is, I 'm too much embarrassed
To state my preference before you both;
I think that words which well may prove unpleasant,
Should not be said point blank, and publicly;
We can give hints enough of how we feel

Without your forcing us to open quarrel;
And gentler intimations are sufficient
To tell a suitor of his ill success.

ORONTE

No, I fear nothing from a frank avowal;
For my part, I consent to it.

ALCESTE

And I
Demand it. Open declaration, now,
Is what I dare insist on most of all,
And I will have no mincing matters, either.
You 're always trying to retain them all;
But no more dallying or uncertainty!
Make now a clear and public declaration,
Or I shall take your silence for decision
And hold that it confirms my worst suspicions.

ORONTE

I thank you for your angry passion, sir,
And I repeat to her the selfsame words.

CELIMENE

How you do weary me with your caprice!
What reason is there in the thing you ask for?
Have I not told you why I can't consent?
Here 's Eliante, I 'll let her be the judge.

SCENE III

ELIANTE, PHILINTE, CELIMENE, ORONTE, ALCESTE

CELIMENE

Dear cousin, I am being persecuted

By these two men, whose scheme seems preconcerted.
They both demand, and both insist upon it,
That I proclaim the choice I make between them,
And publicly forbid the other one
To pay me any court forever after.
Tell me if such a thing is ever done.

ELIANTE

You might do better not to ask my counsel;
Perhaps I am the wrong one to appeal to;
I 'm on the side of those who speak their mind.

ORONTE

Madam, it is in vain you seek evasions.

ALCESTE

Your shifts and turns are ill supported here.

ORONTE

You needs must speak, and stop this balancing.

ALCESTE

You need do nothing but continue silent.

ORONTE

I only ask one word, to settle matters.

ALCESTE

And I shall understand, if you say nothing.

SCENE IV

ARSINOE, CELIMENE, ELIANTE, ALCESTE, PHILINTE, ACASTE, CLITANDRE, ORONTE

ACASTE, *to Célimène*

Madam, we both have come, by your good leave,
To clear up here a certain trifling matter.

CLITANDRE, *to Oronte and Alceste*

Your presence is right welcome, gentlemen;
You likewise are concerned in this affair.

ARSINOE

Madam, you 'll be surprised to see me here;
These gentlemen insisted on my coming;
Both called upon me, and complained to me
Of certain doings that I could not credit.
I feel too sure your heart at least is right,
To think you capable of such a crime;
I shut my eyes against their strongest proofs,
Forgot, for friendship's sake, our little quarrels,
And even consented to come here with them
To see you clear yourself of this vile slander.

ACASTE

Yes, madam, we should like to have the pleasure
Of seeing how you 'll try to face it out.
You wrote this letter, did you, to Clitandre?

CLITANDRE

You penned this sweet epistle to Acaste?

ACASTE, *to Oronte and Alceste*

This writing, gentlemen, is not unknown
To you. I doubt not her civility
Has made you but too well acquainted with it.
Still, this is well worth reading:

> "You are a strange fellow to blame me for my gaiety, and reproach me with being never so merry as when I am not with you. Nothing can be more unjust, and if you don't come very soon and entreat my pardon for this crime, I 'll

never forgive you as long as I live. Our great gawk of a viscount . . ."

He ought to be here.

"Our great gawk of a viscount, whom you complain of first, could never by any possibility suit my taste. Ever since I saw him for three mortal quarters of an hour stand spitting into a well to make rings in the water, I have n't been able to think much of him. As for the little marquis . . . "

Myself, sirs; with no vanity I say it.

"As for the little marquis, who held me so long by the hand yesterday, I think there is nothing so diminutive as his whole personality; he is one of those gentry who have no worth but their titles, and whose merit is all leather and prunello. As for the man with the green ribbons . . . "

(*To Alceste*)

'T is your turn now, sir.

"As for the man with the green ribbons, he amuses me sometimes with his blunt ways and his surly humours; but hundreds of times I find him the most bothersome bore in the world. And as to the sonnetteer . . . "

(*To Oronte*)

This is your package, sir.

"And as to the sonnetteer, who has set up for

a wit, and is determined to be an author whether the world will or no, I can't bring myself to listen to him, and his prose wearies me as much as his verse. So be assured that I am not always so merry as you think; that I miss you greatly, and more than I could wish, at all the entertainments they drag me to; and that the presence of people we like gives a marvellous relish to our pleasures."

CLITANDRE

Now here am I, for my turn.

"Your Clitandre, that you talk to me of, who abounds so in sweet compliments, is the very last of human beings that I could have a liking for. He is absurd to imagine that he is loved, and you are equally so to believe that you are not. Be reasonable, and exchange your ideas for his; and come to see me as often as you can, to help me bear the annoyance of being beset by him."

There is a noble type of character
Set forth. You know its name perhaps, dear madam.
Enough. We 'll both of us be proud to show
This portrait of your heart, where'er we go.

ACASTE

I could find much to say; the theme is tempting;
But I don't hold you worthy of my anger.
I 'll show you, little marquises can find
Hearts to console them, of a nobler kind.

SCENE V

ARSINOE, CELIMENE, ELIANTE, ALCESTE, ORONTE, PHILINTE

ORONTE

What! Must I see myself thus torn to tatters,
After the things I 've had you write to me!
And does your heart, in love's false finery
Arrayed, plight troth with all mankind by turns!
I was too much the dupe, I 'm so no longer.
I owe you much for teaching me to know you,
I 'm richer by the heart you thus restore,
And find revenge in knowing what you lose.

(*To Alceste*)

I shall oppose your love no longer, sir,
And now you may conclude your match with her.

SCENE VI

CELIMENE, ELIANTE, ARSINOE, ALCESTE, PHILINTE

ARSINOE, *to Célimène*

This is the blackest deed I 've ever known;
I can't be silent, I 'm in such a ferment.
Did ever anybody see the like?
Not that I care a snap about those others;
But that this gentleman,

(*Pointing to Alceste*)

whom your good luck
Attached to you, a man of worth and honour,
Who doted on you to idolatry,
Should be so . . .

ALCESTE

Madam, will you please allow me
To manage my affairs myself, and not
Take on yourself this quite superfluous burden?
However warmly you espouse my cause,
I 'm in no way to pay your zeal in kind;
And you are not a person I could think of
Should I seek vengeance by another choice.

ARSINOE

Eh! Do you fancy, sir, I 've that idea,
Or do you think I 'd be so quick to have you?
I must say you are mighty vain if you
Can lay that flattering unction to your soul.
This lady's leavings are an article
'T would be a great mistake to rate so highly.
Pray undeceive yourself; don't be so proud.
People like me are not for such as you.
You 'd do well still to dangle at her skirts,
And marry her—you 'd get your just deserts.

SCENE VII

CELIMENE, ELIANTE, ALCESTE, PHILINTE

ALCESTE, *to Célimène*

Well, I 've kept silent, spite of what I 've heard,
And let them all say out their say before me.
Have I controlled my feelings long enough,
And may I now . . . ?

CELIMENE

Yes, yes, say all you will;
You have the right, you justly may complain

And blame me as you please. I 'm wrong, I own it;
In my confusion I shall not attempt
To put you off with any vain excuse.
The others' anger I despised. But you
I must admit I 've wronged; and your resentment
Beyond all doubt is just; I know how guilty
I must appear to you; how everything
Proclaims that I was ready to betray you,
And that you truly have good cause to hate me.
Do so, I must submit.

ALCESTE

Ah! Can I, traitress?
Can I thus triumph over all my love?
And though with all my might I long to hate you,
How can I ever make my heart obey me?

(*To Eliante and Philinte*)

You see how far an abject love can go;
I call you both to witness to my weakness.
Yet, to confess the truth, this is not all,
You 'll see me push it to the bitter end,
And prove that men are wrongfully called wise,
For all hearts have a touch of human nature.

(*To Célimène*)

Yes, I am willing to forget your crimes;
I 'll find it in my heart to pardon all,
And tell myself that they are weaknesses
To which the vices of the time misled you,
If only you 'll consent to that design
Which I have formed, to flee from all mankind,
And be resolved at once to follow me
Into my desert, where I 've vowed to live.

'T is only so that in the world's opinion
You can repair the mischief of your letters,
And even after scandal so abhorrent
To noble natures, I may love you still.

CELIMENE

What, I renounce the world before I 'm old,
And go be buried in your solitude!

ALCESTE

But if your fondness equals my affection,
What matters to you all the world beside?
Will not your wishes be content with me?

CELIMENE

But solitude has terrors for a soul
Of twenty; mine 's not great and firm enough,
I fear, to let me take that high resolve.
But if my hand can satisfy your wishes,
I 'll bring myself to suffer such a bond,
And marriage . . .

ALCESTE

No; my heart detests you now.
This one rebuff does more than all the rest.
And since you cannot find, in that dear tie,
Your all in me, as I my all in you,
Go, I refuse you; this last sore offence
Sets me forever free from your base fetters.

(*Célimène goes.*)

SCENE VIII

ELIANTE, ALCESTE, PHILINTE

ALCESTE, *to Eliante*

Madam, a hundred virtues crown your beauty,

In you alone I 've found sincerity,
And long I 've felt for you a deep regard;
But let me still esteem you thus; and suffer
My heart, with all its varied agitations,
Not to demand the honour of your service.
I 'm too unworthy, and begin to see
That heaven did not create me fit for marriage;
The leavings of a heart unworthy you,
Would be an offering meaner than your due;
And so . . .

ELIANTE

So let it be, Alceste, I pray;
I 'm at no loss to give my hand away;
And here 's your friend—to seek no further—he,
If I should ask him, might accept of me.

PHILINTE

That honour, madam, is my whole desire;
To win it I would go through flood and fire.

ALCESTE

May you, to taste true happiness, preserve
These feelings each for each, and never swerve.
Betrayed on all sides, overwhelmed with wrong,
I 'll leave this den of thieves vice reigns among,
And find some lonely corner, if I can,
Where one is free to be an honest man.

PHILINTE

Come, madam, let us use our utmost art
To change this savage purpose of his heart.

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